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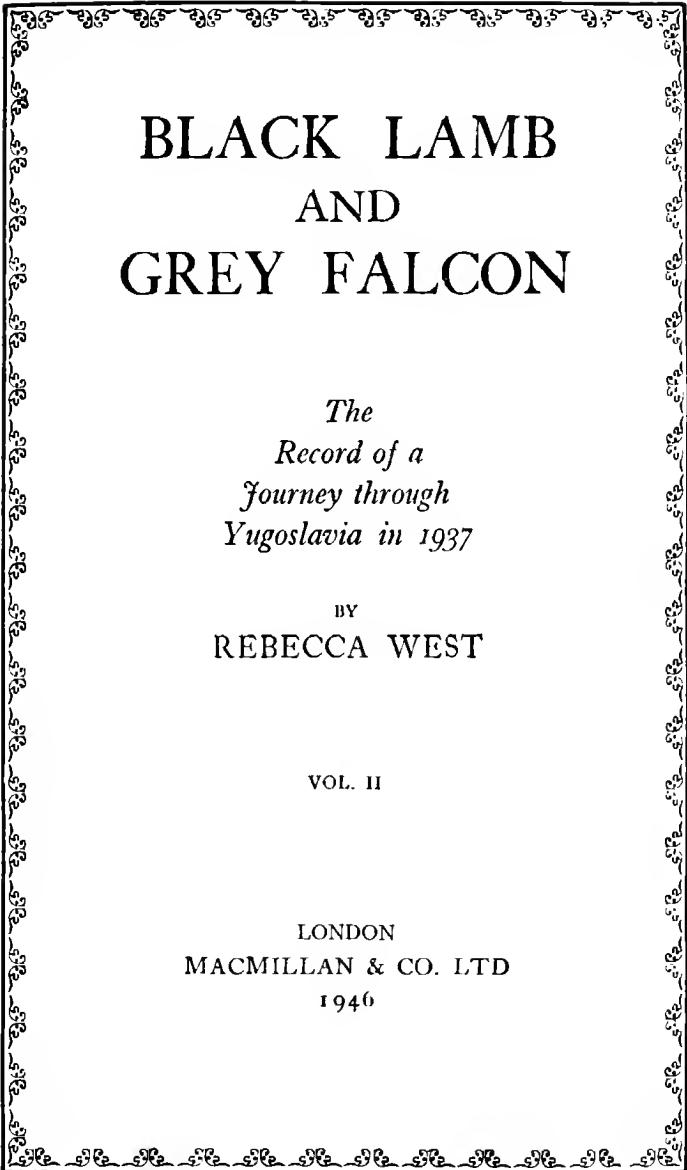
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# BLACK LAMB AND GREY FALCON

*The  
Record of a  
Journey through  
Yugoslavia in 1937*

BY  
REBECCA WEST

VOL. II

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1946



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## MACEDONIA (SOUTH SERBIA)

### *Skoplje I*

I behaved like a professional guide as we hurried out of the station, waving my hand to indicate the wealth that lay behind the darkness. The station lies in the new part of Skoplje, at the end of the main street, which resembles some hundred yards cut out of a secondary shopping centre in an English industrial town, saving the dimness of its lighting, the cobbles and the lack of automobiles, and gives the same impression that the scalp of the years has become dandruffed with undistinguished manufactured goods. But behind the station a tableland was Atlas to a sky marbled with moonlit clouds, and about us there was warm air and the scent of lilacs, and the sound of playing and singing, the astringent sound of Macedonian playing and singing, from the little cafés hidden away in side streets and courtyards. And an event was imposing on the city a rhythm, an excitement. Little fiacres with two horses were clattering over the cobbles, people were hurrying along on clattering heels, all in the same direction. "Look, they are all going to the church for the Easter ceremony," said Constantine; "we must just deposit our luggage in the hotel and start out again, if we are not to miss it, for it is nearly midnight." "I am afraid that I will have to get some other shoes," I said, for one heel of the pair I was wearing had come off as I got out of the train. "But meantime you can tell them to get us a fiacre."

But when we came downstairs again they had done nothing. In the lounge Gerda was sitting quite still, dazed in contemplation of my inconsiderateness as an antique monk of Mount Athos in contemplation of his navel, and Constantine was nervously

agreeing with the strictures she had made before she passed into full ecstasy. The boy who might have fetched us a fiacre was now doing something else, so we had to go back to the station, and there we found only one, which was falling to pieces. It would have been just possible for three, but for four it was dangerous misery. We rattled down the main street to the square leading to the bridge over the Vardar, and my husband turned to crane his neck in wonder at the unique architectural horror which defiled that spot. It regrettably happened that the Yugoslavs, in their joy at turning out the Turks and becoming the masters of Macedonia, pulled down the beautiful mosque that had stood for three centuries in this commanding position, and replaced it by an Officers' Club which is one of the most hideous buildings in the whole of Europe. It is built of turnip-coloured cement and looks like a cross between a fish-kettle and a mausoleum, say the tomb of a very large cod. As my husband received the shock of this building's outline he nearly fell out on the cobbles, and I cried out, "This is a horrible fiacre!" "We might have got a better one," said Gerda, "if we had been a little earlier."

It seemed to me for a minute that there was going to be no Easter, that Gerda had annulled it, and that we were to be left with nothing but a scramble and fuss on our hands. But now we were on the bridge in the cold air that blows off the Vardar, which carries with it the snake-like chill of those rivers which grow big quite soon after they leave the snow mountains. On the black waters the embankment lamps made shuddering pools of golden oil; behind them the new houses, simple and artless yet shaped by a good tradition of living, made un-Western shapes against the darkness; very high above the town the bright windows of a fortress shone where one had expected the stars. We turned off the bridge on to the embankment. The river rushed beside us, above us the flocks of silver clouds rushed over the black firmament, on the pavement shuffled a crowd, so close set that they could no longer hurry, the night making their clothes darker and their faces lighter than they would be by day, before them going the happy sound of festival chatter, pressing towards the church with the sightseeing greed that is the peculiar charm of an Eastern congregation. They might have been going to see the elephants. We stepped from our fiacre and joined them, shuffled with them down a side street, and found ourselves facing a church that looked like

neither a church nor a circus, but an opulent two-storeyed farm building.

Even within it had its oddities. It was built about a hundred years ago, when the sultans were showing a certain indulgence to the Christians and were letting them put up churches, though usually this permission was useless unless they bribed the local pashas ; and its builders were four brothers who had learned their craft working as stonemasons all over the Balkans and in Italy. The chief of them was said to have been unable to read or write, and their work has indeed a strange air of combined culture and illiteracy. There was here a competent yet childish handling of highly developed forms which, profoundly disparate, were forcibly unified by a mind that knew nothing of their origins and therefore not all of their essences. A Byzantine dome suddenly hollowed the flat roof of an immensely high Italian basilica ; in its upper shadows Asian galleries guarded their secrets with pierced screens ; on the right and the left of the church were two great carved chairs, one for the king and one for the bishop, suggesting a rude Ravenna ; a pulpit had been perched at a great height, because the eye of the Balkan builder had been accustomed to the *nimbar*, the pulpit in the mosque, which is always at the top of a long stairway, steep as a ladder ; and here and there were forthright and sensible hinged windows of clear glass set in iron frames, such as one might have seen in a farmhouse.

In this strange building, now full of a deep twilight, stood many people, waiting, holding unlit tapers in their hands. The iconostasis, which is the characteristic architectural feature of the Eastern Church, the screen before the altar, is here a wall surmounted by a cross, a fortification defending the ever-threatened holy things ; its height, made gorgeous by icons and gilt carvings, was in this dusk a shadowy richness. The silver plates that are laid over the haloes and hands of the people represented in the icons glimmered like moonlight. Here and there a lamp burned dimly in the chandeliers that hung low from the roof ; and a weak light came from the candles on the table in the middle of the church, where the dead Christ lay in the likeness of an embroidered cloth. Most of the people had already paid their respects to this symbol, and were standing still in their places, the men to the right, the women to the left, so far as the elders were concerned, though the younger people often



broke this rule. There is a step running round the edge of the church, so that there was a line of people behind the others and raised above them, which gave a handsomeness to the scene, a superfluity of grace ; it might have been so ordered in the chapel of a great palace, by an emperor. But even now many people still pressed about the table to greet the body of Christ. The holy table was painted blue-green with some flowers here and there, and it had a canopy rising to a battered trellis canopy ; some eighteenth-century bedsteads look so. It was curtained with machine-made lace, and on the embroidered cloth lay a heavy volume of the Gospels and some coins, none of them of great value, which the congregation had left there. Old men whose faces were scored by hard work and poverty as by actual wounds ; young men sleek as seals in Western clothes ; old women with grey plaits hanging to their waist, in white serge coats covered with black embroideries which were beginning to break away from the stuff, because they had stitched them when they were young and it was too long ago ; young girls, who had flowers in the hair yet were rolled into the wintry thickness of sheepskins, and others who were dressed as they are in Palmers Green or Rochester, New York : all these came and looked down on the embroidered cloth, and were tranced in sorrow. They stooped and kissed it with that unquestioning worship which every woman wants to feel for the man whom she loves, but which, should she be able to feel it for him, is more likely to bring their relationship to a painful end than any disagreeable action she might commit against him. It was strange to recognise this kind of worship performed by men as well as women, and not to have to fear that it would arouse resentment and caprice in its object.

There passed to the table a young woman with a round face almost stupid with sweetness, who was wearing the Debar head-dress, which I think one of the most beautiful garments in the world : a handkerchief of fine linen, scattered with a few circles of solid red or rose embroidery, in which there is inscribed, as if to hide it from the public note, a cross, often of crimson or purple. Every woman sews it according to her own vision, but it is always a masterpiece, a sublime symbol of a persecuted but gorgeous religion. As she bent over the table I twitched at my husband's sleeve and said, " Look, she is from Debar," and he repeated, nodding his head, " Yes, she is from Debar," and I

marvelled at his amiability, for I had never told him anything about Debar. Then, suddenly, the full crash of the Easter ritual was upon us. In an instant the procession of priests came through the door in the iconostasis, there was the gentle lion roar of hymns sung by men of a faith which has never exacted celibacy from its priests nor pacifism from its congregations, and flames had run from wick to wick of the tapers in our hands, till the whole church was a field of gentle primrose fires.

This is the supreme moment of Easter, when the priests lift up the embroidered cloth from the table, take it out into the open air, and walk round the church three times at the head of the congregation, all carrying their lighted tapers and singing a hymn proclaiming that Christ has risen. Constantine and I had walked in this procession when we had come to Skoplje the year before, and I had wanted to do it again. It is the very consummation of the picturesque, with the flower-like yellow brightness of the tapers, the coldness of the starlight and moonlight, the glittering crosses and vestments of the priests, the dark people leaning from the lit windows of the houses in the square, which seem themselves to waver with the pulse of the advancing and receding lights and shadows. But there is here more than that, there is true Easter, the recognition of the difference between winter and summer, between cold and heat, between darkness and light, between death and life, between minus and plus. Something important which passes unnoticed because it is continually experienced is felt again in its real importance. But now we could not join the procession, for we had been at the iconostasis end of the church when it started, and it had accomplished its three circuits before we reached the door. When the Metropolitan who was at the head of the priests halted in the doorway to make his sermon, we were in the antechamber, called the narthex, which runs across the front of any Byzantine church, which here was specially large and secular, because the architects were accustomed to the great porches of mosques, where Moslems are accustomed to sit and gossip and settle business and talk politics.

I was extremely frightened as we stood there, for I thought it possible that a number of people, packed together and constantly stirring in their discomfort and all holding lighted tapers, might set themselves on fire. But I forgot my alarm, because

I was standing opposite a peasant woman sitting on a window ledge who was the very essence of Macedonia, who was exactly what I had come back to see. She was the age that all Macedonian women seem to become as soon as they cease to be girls : a weather-beaten fifty. There was a dark cloth about her hair and shoulders, and in its folds, and in her noble bones and pain-grooved flesh, she was like many Byzantine Madonnas to be seen in frescoes and mosaics. In her rough hand she mothered her taper, looking down on its flame as if it were a young living thing ; and on the sleeve of her russet sheepskin jacket there showed an embroidery of stylised red and black trees which derived recognisably from a pattern designed for elegant Persian women two thousand years before. There was the miracle of Macedonia, made visible before our eyes.

This woman had suffered more than most other human beings, she and her forebears. A competent observer of this countryside has said that every single person born in it before the Great War (and quite a number who were born after it) has faced the prospect of violent death at least once in his or her life. She had been born during the calamitous end of Turkish maladministration, with its cycles of insurrection and massacre, and its social chaos. If her own village had not been murdered, she had certainly heard of many that had, and had never had any guarantee that hers would not some day share the same fate. Then, in her maturity, had come the Balkan wars and the Great War, with a cholera and typhus epidemic in between. Later had come I.M.R.O. ; and there was always extreme poverty. She had had far less of anything, of personal possessions, of security, of care in childbirth, than any Western woman can imagine. But she had two possessions which any Western woman might envy. She had strength, the terrible stony strength of Macedonia ; she was begotten and born of stocks who could mock all bullets save those which went through the heart, who could outlive the winters when they were driven into the mountains, who could survive malaria and plague, who could reach old age on a diet of bread and paprika. And cupped in her destitution as in the hollow of a boulder there are the last drops of the Byzantine tradition.

With our minds we all know what Byzantium was. We are aware that the Eastern continuance of the Roman Empire was a supremely beautiful civilisation. It was imperfect because it

was almost totally ignorant of economics, and the people were distraught with hungry discontents which they could not name. We know that by the Golden Horn the waning empire developed a court ceremonial, which the earlier emperors had borrowed from Asia, until it made all those who watched it wise about the symbols of spiritual things that can be expressed by sight and sound. The Church itself learned from its partner the State, and raised the Mass to a supreme masterpiece of communal art ; and the people, saturated with ritual impressions of the idea of God and of the Emperor, who was by theory the Viceroy of God, produced an art that is unique in its nobility, that in its architecture and painting and mosaics and metal-work and textiles found a calligraphy for the expression of man's graver experiences which makes all other arts seem a little naïve or gross. We know that these achievements were not technical tricks but were signs of a real spiritual process, for the Byzantines were able to live in dignity and decency for four centuries in the knowledge that they were doomed, that one day they would be destroyed root and branch by the merciless Turks. They were not merely stoical in that shadow ; they continued to live in the fulness of life, to create, even, in the very last phase of their doom, to the point of pushing out the shoots of a new school of painting.

All this we know with our minds, and with our minds only. But this woman knew it with all her being, because she knew nothing else. It was the medium in which she existed. Turkish misrule had deprived her of all benefit from Western culture ; all she had had to feed on was the sweetness spilled from the overturned cup of Constantinople. Therefore she was Byzantine in all her ways, and in her substance. When she took up her needle it instinctively pricked the linen in Byzantine designs, and she had the Byzantine idea that one must decorate, always decorate, richly decorate. As she sat there she was stiff, it might almost be said carpeted in the work of her own hands. The stiffness was not an accidental effect of her materials, it was a symbol of her beliefs about society. She believed that people who are to be respected practise a more stately bearing than those who are of no account ; her own back was straight, she did not smile too easily. Therefore she found nothing tedious in the ritual of her Church. She could have sat for long hours as she was then, nursing her taper in quiet contentment, watch-

ing grave and slow-moving priests evoke the idea of magnificence, and induce the mood of adoration which is due to the supremely magnificent. She was not gaping at a peepshow, she was not merely passing the time. She was possessed by the same passion that had often astounded the relief workers who came here at the beginning of the century to fight the famine that always followed the suppression of the Christian revolts. Again and again in villages which had fallen under Turkish disfavour and were therefore subject without cease to murder and arson and pillage, they urged inhabitants to emigrate to Serbia and Bulgaria; and the peasants always answered that that might be the wisest course, but that they could not desert their churches. This was not superstition. Before the altars, the offshoot of Byzantinism had passed the same test as its parent; it had prevented doom from becoming degradation. This woman's face was unresentful, exalted, sensitive to her sorrows yet preoccupied by that which she perceived to be more important, magnificence and its adoration.

Now the Metropolitan was at the door, a gorgeous figure, not only because his vestments were bright with gold thread, and his high mitre and pastoral staff and the cross on his breast glittered with jewels. There is inherent dignity in the lines of a costume that has incorporated the philosopher's mantle of the ancients, the Roman consul's scarf, and the tunic and gauntlets of the Byzantine Emperor. In a rich voice the Metropolitan announced that Christ had risen, and from the faces above the primrose flames came sharp cries of belief. Then he uttered a prayer or repeated a passage from the Gospels, I was not sure which, and went on to deliver an address which compared the resurrection of Christ and the liberation of Christian Macedonia from the Turks by Serbia twenty-five years before. It was, in fact, straight Yugoslavian propaganda, and most of it could have easily been delivered from a political platform.

It was only our modernity that was shocked. This was not an innovation, but a continuance of the ancient tradition of the Church. "As the body politic, like the human body, is composed of parts and members, so the most important and the most vital parts are the Emperor and the Patriarch," wrote a Byzantine theologian, "in the same way that the peace and happiness of the human being depends on the harmony of body and soul, so in the polity there must be perfect agreement between

the Emperor and the priesthood." Since the Orthodox Church does not pretend to be anything but a religion, since it does not claim to be in possession of the final truth about philosophy and ethics and political science, this does not raise such difficulties as it would in the West. The Orthodox Church conceived, and still conceives, that its chief business is magic, the evocation by ritual of the spiritual experiences most necessary to man. It has also the duty of laying down a general pattern of moral behaviour. If the civil authority assists at the ritual and accepts this pattern it has a right to demand the support of the ecclesiastical authority, and the ecclesiastical authority has a right to give it, save when its own sphere is invaded. It will, in fact, support the civil authority politically if the civil authority does not meddle in theology. This is an attitude that is bound to be adopted by any State Church, and that involves no difficulties in the case of a Church which does not claim final wisdom on profane subjects as well as divine.

The Orthodox Church did not renounce that claim by choice. The renunciation was forced on it by the troubled character of Byzantine history. One can claim final wisdom on a subject to the degree that life as regards that subject is predictable. Now life in Europe has never been orderly for more than a few years at a time and in a limited area ; but in the West it has been orderly enough, if only in the homogeneity of its disorder, to allow clever men to lay down principles that they could safely claim to be eternal, since they afforded useful bases for action and thought during some considerable period of time. In the East of Europe it has not been so. Continual and astonishing were its historical convulsions. The Byzantine Empire, which suffered invasion by bloodthirsty and pitiless fellow-Christians who had come to redeem the tomb of Christ in Jerusalem and stopped to taste the more immediately delectable pleasure of looting Constantinople, and which knew itself certain to be invaded by Asiatics as inaccessible to appeal as the personages in a nightmare, could not prophesy. Hence its genius turned away from speculative thought to art, and its Church preserved its dogma without developing it and concentrated its forces on the glory of the Mass, which gave a magic protection against evils that were unknown as well as those that were known. Thereby it brought on itself the criticisms that it was sterile and archaic in teaching and an arcanum of superstition ; but it could not

have served its people better in their special tribulation.

For these historical reasons nobody in the congregation was shocked because the Metropolitan's sermon was a speech in support of the Government ; and I am sure also, since the circumstances of Balkan life have forbidden any intertwining of religious and pacifist sentiment, that nobody was shocked because the Metropolitan had in his young days been a comitadji. The comitadji who waged guerilla warfare against the Turks in Macedonia before the war covered a wide range of character. Some were highly disciplined, courageous and ascetic men, often from good families in the freed Slav countries, who harried the Turkish troops, particularly those sent to punish Christian villages, and who held unofficial courts to correct the collapse of the legal system in the Turkish provinces. Others were fanatics who were happy in massacring the Turks but even happier when they were purging the movement of suspected traitors. Others were robust nationalists, to whom the proceedings seemed a natural way of spirited living. Others were blackguards who were in the business because they enjoyed murder and banditry. All intermediate shades of character were fully represented. This made it difficult for the Western student to form a clear opinion about Near Eastern politics ; it also made it difficult, very difficult, for a Macedonian peasant who saw a band of armed men approaching his village.

The Metropolitan had, in point of fact, belonged to one of the most admirable among these bands ; but if he had been careless about the choice of his companions it would not have troubled the peasant woman who was nursing her taper and gazing at him in thankfulness over its glow. He was a good magician. He knew how to wear the garments, how to speak the words, how to make the obeisances, that gave her the beautiful experience of loving a flawless being. He was a magician, and, what was a great marvel to her, he was not her enemy. For two centuries her people had been under the horrible necessity of seeking this magic, which was their sole consolation, from agents who, in the intervals of dispensing it to them, contrived their ruin and death. In the eighteenth century the Church fell into the power of the Phanariots, the wealthy Greeks, who established themselves in Constantinople, and worked hand in glove with the Turks ; not least joyfully when their Moslem masters set them on the Slavs though they themselves retained

their Christianity. They persuaded the Sultan to put the whole of the Balkan Church under the power of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, an institution which they kept in their pocket. They then turned the Church into an elaborate fiscal system for fleecing the Slavs, by exacting enormous fees for the performance of all religious functions, even stripping the peasants of their last farthing as a charge for saying prayers for the dead. They not only robbed their congregations of their material possessions, they strove to deprive them of their most treasured immaterial possession, their racial identity. There were always a number of Slavs so devout that they insisted upon becoming priests; if these were not prepared to forget that they were Serb or Bulgar, and play traitor to their own blood, they were enlisted as the servants of the Greek clergy, and if they displeased their masters they were beaten during divine service before silent congregations of their own people. There was also a ruthless campaign against the speaking of the Serbian and Bulgarian languages, and an attempt to enforce the use of Greek over the whole of Macedonia, instead of the small Southern district to which it had long been limited.

But as the nineteenth century progressed the Ottoman Turks began to conceive a great fear of the Greeks, some of whom had already achieved independence in the kingdom of Greece; and the unrest of the Serbs and Bulgars grew with every decade. So the Sultan worked out a new application of the fiendish rule *divide et impera*, and in 1870 he appointed a Bulgarian exarch to rule over the Churches of Bulgaria and Macedonia. The term exarch shows the curious persistence of the Byzantine tradition in these parts. It was originally used by the Eastern emperors to denote a viceroy; the Exarch of Ravenna was the governor who represented their power in Italy. But it exemplifies the degradation which the Byzantine tradition had suffered in Turkish hands that it is hard to define the ecclesiastical office to which the name was given in modern times, and it seems indeed to have held a different meaning at different times. In this case it meant the patriarch of this province, appointed to fulfil a political mission but with uncertain guarantee of support against the opponents of his mission. The situation can be grasped if we imagine the British Government sending out an Archbishop to Australia to carry on his ecclesiastical duties, and also to compel the Irish and the Scottish



to lose their identities and become English patriots, while at the same time doing nothing to prevent the existing Scottish and Irish religions and political organisations from opposing him. The Sultan did not recall the Greek priests who were already in Macedonia, and they fought savagely to retain their power. As the Serbs naturally found Bulgar control of their Church no more admirable than Greek they too were up in arms. Thus, at the cost of all peace and gentleness in a community of over half a million people, the Ottoman Empire preserved itself from the risks arising out of a union between its Greek and Serb and Bulgar subjects.

This horrible confusion of religion and bloodshed persisted till the end of the Balkan wars. The woman sitting on the window-ledge was certainly not too young to remember a certain Greek Archbishop of a Macedonian diocese to the south of Skopljë, whose hatred of the Slavs in his spiritual care was indeed spiritual, since it could hardly be satisfied by anything he could do to their bodies. Once he commissioned a band of assassins to murder a Bulgarian leader who was lying wounded in a hideaway. They were successful. As proof they cut off his head and took it back to the Archiepiscopal Palace, where the Archbishop received it and paid them well. It offered an unpleasing appearance, as a bullet had smashed the jaw. Nevertheless he had it photographed and hung an enlargement on the wall of the room where he received his flock, so that they might take a lesson. Many a woman, such as this one, sensitive and exalted, could never hear the proclamation that Christ had risen except from the lips of this atrocious enemy of her kind. The Archbishop was a man of extreme personal beauty and the graduate of a Western university. At the thought of this unpleasing incongruity, one of a million omens that the world is not simple, not consistent, and often not agreeable, my hand shook and my taper shivered.

The Metropolitan was still speaking, it was becoming enormously hot, and the heat was laden with the smell of honey, for it is ordained that all tapers used in churches must be made of beeswax. There came back to me the fear of fire which I had felt earlier in the service, and this was accompanied by a revulsion from the horror of history, and a dread that it might really be witless enough to repeat itself. Fire spreads, and the substances it enflames put up no defence, burn and become

ashes. Human beings love to inflict pain on their fellow-creatures, and the species yields to its perverse appetite, allowing vast tragedies to happen and endure for centuries, people to agonise and become extinct. The pleasantness of life which is so strong when it manifests itself that it is tempting to regard it as the characteristic and even determinant quality of the universe, is of no real avail. I could be burnt to death in this church, though the air smelt of honey. In moonlight, by fountains where roses grew and nightingales sang, all less tangible and superior beauty could be beaten down into earth, not to emerge itself again until freed by another Creation. I let myself feel these fears to their extreme, with a certain sense of luxury, for facing me was this Macedonian woman, who could, better than anybody else I had ever met, give me an assurance on these points. There was nothing over-positive in her statement. One can shout at the top of one's voice the information that the 11.15 for Brighton leaves from platform 6, but subtler news has to be whispered, for the reason that to drag knowledge of reality over the threshold of consciousness is an exhausting task, whether it is performed by art or by experience. She made no spectacular declaration that man is to be saved; simply her attitude assumed that this Easter would end with no more fatality than any other Easter she had known, and her body, wasted yet proud in its coarse and magnificent clothes, proclaimed that death may last five hundred years yet not be death.

### *Skoplje II*

Before we went down to breakfast my husband called me to look out of the lavatory window. The part of Skoplje behind the hotel exhibits a form of urban economy which I find it hard to understand: in paved gardens crammed with lilac bushes and fig trees, all now bobbing under heavy rain, stand new and trim little houses, each alongside a hovel where a craftsman, who seems to have nothing to do with the house-owner, exercises his skill on the top of rickety stairs under sagging roofs of red-brown tiles. These stucco houses are designed in a vein of pleasantly vapid romanticism. Minnie Mouse might well have chosen one for her first home with

Mickey, for they bristle with towers and loggias and a great many silly little balconies, on which she could be discovered by Mr. Disney's lens, watering flowers and singing a tender lyric in that voice which is the very distillation of imbecile sweetness.

On the pavement, under one such balcony, lay a Turk, a Moslem of true Turkish blood, as most of the Moslems are, here in Macedonia. He was in rags, his head was covered with the imperfect memory of a fez, the upturned points of his sandals had broken off. The shelter of the balcony afforded him enough dry pavement for his body, and there he stretched himself, looking out at the rain, and slowly eating something, with a notable economy of effort. He was resting his elbow on the doorstep, so that he had to lift his hand not nearly so far as one would suppose to raise the food to his bearded mouth. "I never saw quite such a hopeless proposition," said my husband. "I see he is a Turk, he has that indestructibly handsome air, but he is so unlike the Turks I have seen in the Ataturk's Turkey." "Poor man," I said, "he is the residue of residues. The Turkish population in Skoplje, which used to be called Ūskub, was increased in the seventies by the Turks who left Bosnia when the Austrians occupied it. The Slav Moslems stayed, and a few Turkish Moslems of the better sort, who could cope with Western ways. Probably a large number of these Turks never found a place to fit into here, for this was already a contracting society. Then there has been a further winnowing since the war, by the repatriation of all the Balkan Turks who were willing to face life under the reforms of the Ataturk. But, all the same, I like this man." "Yes," said my husband, "this is not lethargy we are regarding, it is an immense capacity for pleasure, which is being exercised in difficult circumstances."

We went down to breakfast and sat at a table by the window, drinking coffee full of the sweet broken curds of sheep's milk, eating the peculiarly excellent rolls that Moslems bake, and enjoying the show of Skoplje. This is one of the best spectacles I have ever enjoyed, and it is due to the presence of the Turk. There are about 75,000 inhabitants of the town, of whom over 10,000 are Turks who gave the town its colour in the first place. There are fewer minarets than there are in Sarajevo, but they are potent. And because there is so strong a Christian element in the town, there are constant dramatic disclosures of the essences of Christianity and Islam, each being shown up by its

opposite. Soon there came past the window some Albanians, to begin the revelation. Though I had my back to them I knew they were on their way, for a look of fatherly concern on my husband's face told me that he had just caught sight of his first Albanian. "They are not really coming down," I said. No Westerner ever sees an Albanian for the first time without thinking that the poor man's trousers are just about to drop off. They are cut in a straight line across the loins, well below the hip-bone, and have no visible means of support; and to make matters psychologically worse they are of white or biscuit homespun heavily embroidered with black wool in designs that make a stately reference to the essential points of male anatomy. The occasion could not seem more grave, especially as there is often a bunch of uncontrolled shirt bulging between the waistcoat and these trousers. Nothing, however, happens. The little white skull-caps they all wear, which have an air of second-rank haloes, of commoners' aureoles, suggest that there may perhaps be a miraculous element involved. There is of course a partial explanation in the stiffness of the material, which, where it is reinforced by embroidery, must be nearly as stiff as a boned corset. But all the same the cause of the phenomenon lies in the Albanian nature. There is something about the Moslem Albanians which would make them take chances with their national costume: it is as if they had not eaten of the tree of good or evil, as if they were unalloyed by the seriousness that Christianity adds to the soft metal of human nature. A lovely facile charm hangs about them, comes to dazzling crystallisation in their smiles.

The group of Albanians who had startled my husband passed, and were followed by some of their antithesis, women from the villages on Skopska Tserna Gora (the Black Mountain of Skoplje). The tragic majesty of their appearance, which is unmitigated by beauty, and hardly ever put to the slight test of a smile, is consonant with the history of their breed. These villages were never fully conquered by the Turk during the five hundred years of the Turkish occupation, they murdered most of the Turkish landowners who tried to settle amongst them and an unending tale of tax-collectors, and they dourly clung to their Christian tradition. They wear the most dignified and beautiful dresses of any in the Balkans, gowns of coarse linen embroidered with black wool in designs using the Christian

symbols, which are at once abstract (being entirely unrepresentational) and charged with passionate feeling. Their wide sleeves are thick as carpets with solid black embroideries, stitched in small squares, with often a touch of deep clear blue, which gives the effect of an inner light burning in the heart of darkness. Such garments, worn by grim women whose appearance announces that they would not do a number of things possible to less noble natures, have an effect of splendid storm, of symphonic music, and make no suggestion of facility or charm.

The contrast is presented by the town itself, as we saw when we went on for a stroll after our breakfast, as soon as Gerda and Constantine had joined us. We crossed the bridge over the Vardar, which was brownish with the late rains. To the left we looked past a screen of willows at the foot of the cliff on which the garrison fortress stands, on the site of a castle built by the famous Serbian Tsar Stephen Dushan, and we saw the snow mountains from which the river derived its cold breath. To the right there ran along the embankments lines of new dwellings, offices and public buildings, interspersed with the hovels that are the tide-marks of the Ottoman Empire; and behind was the old town of Skoplje, which has an inveterately country quality, because terraces of rough farm land and orchard fall headlong into the heart of it from the landward side of the fortress. This was a town as the West knows it, exhausting, however picturesque it might be, because of the fret of effort. We took a road that ran uphill into the Turkish quarter, and knew a different sort of town.

Sarajevo is a Moslem, but not a Turkish town: a fantasia on Oriental themes worked out by a Slav population. Here in Skoplje we saw what the Oriental himself does with Oriental themes. Gone was the sense of form; we were faced with an essential discontinuity. It was explicit in the shops. They are at once neat and slovenly, they have been organised by minds that attack any enterprise with brilliancc and fluency and then flag. A shopkeeper spends incredible ingenuity in displaying articles of only one or two kinds, and will put the most appetising of them alongside others that have been unsaleable not for mere months but actual decades. In one shop playing-cards of exquisite seventeenth-century design were displayed beside boxes of candles that had once been coloured and fluted, that were now merely stained and collapsed, and that bore a date-

stamp of 1921. There is at work also a love of bright colours, which never passes on to the natural development of modifying them and fitting them into designs, but monotonously presents them in their crude state ; there are windows piled with skeins of silks, more lustrous than our shamefaced Western yarns have dared to be for many years, and to be bought only in white, yolk-of-egg yellow, prussian blue and Jezebel scarlet. Yet, in their very triviality, these shops afforded delight. I never made a more agreeable purchase than a halfpenny cone of roasted nubs of sweet corn. The shop sold nothing else : they lay in great scented golden heaps, through which there ran a ghostly crepitanace as soon as one grain was touched. The owner must have heard it a million million times ; it still amused him.

But this lack of psychological staying-power has, perhaps, a physiological basis. I realised that in the slight disappointment I felt at our visit, since the quarter was not so vivacious as I had remembered it on my last visit. Now some veiled women were padding by, some bearded men were sitting in cafés as good as veiled by their expressions, which announced a restriction to the pure field of sensationalism utterly outside the comprehension of the Western mind, which can hardly conceive of existence apart from the practice of analysis and synthesis. But before these streets had been like a scene in an operetta. It had seemed probable that tenor strains might proceed from the young baker, ox-eyed and plumpish, but shapely, who leaned over his long trays of loaves and covered them with linen cloths crossed with delicious lines of reds and blues, and that the black wisps of women bargaining behind those veils might turn out to be the ballet and coalesce in some dance gaily admitting their equivoque of concealing and proclaiming their sex. But I had made my earlier visits at seven and eight in the morning, and now it was eleven, and I had noticed before that the Turks cannot keep abreast the twenty-four hours anything like so well as Westerners. The afternoon finds its vitality clouded ; the evening is sluggish ; and at night one crosses the Vardar from the new town, where any number of Slavs are sitting in the restaurants, talking politics, drinking wine, eating spiced sausages and listening to music, into darkened streets where there are bursts of singing from a few shuttered cafés, and for the rest houses fast asleep.

The Turks, I fancy, are a people who tire easily. When they are wildly excited, as they often are by militarist ardour and religious fanaticism, they cannot be fatigued ; the reward for total abstinence from alcohol seems, illogically enough, to be the capacity for becoming intoxicated without it. But in ordinary life they seem subject to a languor that comes on in the day far too soon after dawn, and in a man's life far too soon after youth. The young Turk, as one sees him with his friends in the café or in a park, is a laughing and active creature, but after thirty-five he acquires a stolidity which might be mistaken for the outward sign of wisdom, were it not that it is impossible for so many to be in possession of that rare quality. He is given to a gesture that claims to express deliberation, that is actually an indefinite postponement of thought ; and as he makes it his hand, even if he be scarcely middle-aged, looks sapless and old. It may be that the breakdown of the Turkish administration was not only a matter of political incompetence but resulted from a prevalent physical disability affecting men precisely at an age when they would be given the most responsible administrative posts.

But, if the morning glory had left the quarter, there was much still to delight us. I remember someone who took drugs once attempting to explain to me the charm of the habit, by saying, " You know, one gives oneself an injection and I do not know how it is, but one spends a delightful day. Nothing happens, but somehow every tiny incident of the routine is interesting and enjoyable. If one is sitting in an armchair and someone comes in to lay a tray on the table, one watches the action as if it were a most exquisite miming, and the simplest remark, a ' Hello, are you there ? ' on the telephone, sounds like an epigram." The East is said to have the same effect as drugs on those who frequent it, and certainly this town, which was so much next door to the East that one was as good as through the door, exercised that same power of making the ordinary delicious. We turned aside into the garden of a mosque, not an extraordinary building, save for the light cast on the cross-currents of Balkan culture by the contrast between its ancient and fine design and the white crudity of its substance. It was a famous sixteenth-century mosque which had been allowed to fall into ruins by the Turks of the Ottoman Empire, fanatical yet far too indolent to defend their sacred places ; and

it had been restored by a Yugoslav official, a Herzegovinian Moslem, who had fought against the Turks in the Balkan wars because he was a Slav patriot, was now a freethinker, and was inspired to this act of architectural piety by aesthetic passions engendered in him no further east than Paris, where he had taken a degree in Oriental studies. Everybody in the garden of this not extraordinary mosque was behaving in the most ordinary way. At the fountain before it some young men were washing ; two prosperous middle-aged men were sitting on the domed and pillared white porch, and talking not more dramatically than two Londoners at a club window ; round the corner some older and poorer men were sitting on the grass by the tomb of a saint, wagging their beards in a conversation, portentous yet as light in weight as could well be, like the conversation in a morning train from an English suburb. There was no formulable reason why these people should afford a ravishing spectacle, but so they did. It was perhaps because irritability was absent from their world. To watch one's kind and find no trace of this disease, which in the West is so prevalent that it might be mistaken for a sign of life, was like looking in a mirror and seeing one's skin unlined as a baby's. We ourselves fell into the serene mood of the place and sat there for longer than we meant.

But there was a view : the garden was built on a terrace high above the domes and minarets and russet roofs of Skoplje, and showed us the green hills surrounding the town, spiked with the white toothpicks of nameless Moslem graves, and the bare blue mountains beyond, shadowed violet by the passing clouds. Our Western conscientiousness made us go to look at this view from the best advantage and we went to the wall of the garden, where we forgot our purpose, for the hills fell steeply to a street where people of a wild and harlequin sort were leading an entertaining life. A load of hay had been flung up against the wall of one house, and was munched by three ponies, raw-boned and flea-bitten. Another house, which had a square of periwinkle blue affixed on its white front for no particular reason, had a mistress who was evidently an indefatigable but eccentric housewife : through its door there flew every few minutes a jet of water from an emptied basin, discharged with the extreme of shrewishness. Outside another house sat a pretty woman and two pretty girls, smiling and bright-eyed in



perpetual pleasure, cooking something on a tiny brazier and drinking from an amphora they passed from one to another. One had a kerchief, one a jacket, one trousers, of bright, rich, shallow red. Soon they noticed that we were watching them, and cried out to us and waved their long narrow hands; and presently, as if to show off their treasures, one of the girls ran into the house and came out laughing, holding up a baby for our admiration, naked and kicking and lustrous brown.

This was Slav sensuousness, European sensuousness, quite unlike its Turkish, its Asiatic analogue. At the first stimulus from the outside it had refused to confine itself to mere blandness, it insisted on involving itself with material which, though it certainly can evoke pleasure, can unleash tragedy also. The woman who took her child in her arms was raising trains of thought that could lead far beyond the fields of pleasantness, that referred to the pain of childbirth, the aching inadequacy of love, which cannot keep safe what it loves, the threat of estrangement and death. She would have been safer if she had continued to sit with her friends laughing at little things beside the small flame of the brazier, and drinking cool water out of the amphora, and that is what the true Turk would have done. All over this city of two natures there is demonstrated this contrast between Christian imprudence, immoderation, audacity in search of delight, and the Turkish thrifty limitation to the small cell where anything not delightful cannot enter. We saw an illustration of it that first morning, arising out of the attitude of common men to roses.

We owed the lesson to our intention of visiting the great caravanserai which lies among the little Moslem houses, where the diplomats and merchants stayed on their way from Dubrovnik to Constantinople, a superb memorial of the Ozymandian sort, too huge as a whole and in every part to have been dictated by necessity, with its full-bodied arcades round its marble courtyard, and its inordinate thickness of mulberry-coloured brick. Beside it are its baths, long grass growing like hair from its domes, with a poppy here and there. But there was no way through the hoarding across its Arabian Nights gateway, and when small boys in fezes told us that the key could be found in a cottage down an alley, they were perpetrating what seemed to them an exquisite witticism at the expense of the stranger. This little pavilion standing among lawns hemmed in

with lilac bushes and rose trees, which should have been the home of a virtuous young girl supporting herself by her needle, was in fact a police station. We looked through the open case-ments and saw, not Gretchen at her spinning-wheel, but five gendarmes sitting at table, one purple-faced and mountainous, others with the fine seams of their uniforms running down to tough and slender waists, but all iron-jawed and far too large for the low room. A ray of sunshine showed the red glaze of paprika on their plates and a pink wine oily in their glasses, and shone through one sprung petal of a crimson rose in a little tin cup. They sprang to their feet as we looked in at the window, and came out of a door that was not high enough for any of them, so that they all straightened up as they greeted us, like genial pterodactyls. They explained that for some final reason the caravanserai was closed, and led us back through the gardens with official but unimpassioned courtesy, which suddenly glowed into a warmer emotion when Constantine, in saying good-bye, complimented them on their roses.

Immediately all the gendarmes uttered cries of delight and began to strip roses from the bushes, and pressed them into our hands, giving the men rather more than to Gerda and myself. "Are these flowers not more pure than the snows of the mountain?" demanded the purple-faced one, tenderly taking some clusters from a white Rambler. Then an idea struck him and he cried an order towards the little house in the voice peculiar to sergeant-majors all the world over. It brought out the gendarmerie servant, a young woman who looked robust but tired, carrying the tea-cup containing the rose we had seen on the table. "This," he said, pressing the flower into Constantine's hands with the air of one who pretends for politeness' sake that he gives little but who knows well that he gives much, "this we think the most perfect bloom we have yet had from our garden this spring."

Later we saw a rose of that same sort, or as like as makes no matter, in the hand of a butcher sitting outside his shop. He was a modish young man who wore his fez at an angle, and was distinctly handsome in spite of a measure of cosy Oriental plumpness. But that is always less deterrent than our Western obesity; while we put on weight because of some defect in our organisation, some fault in our digestive or glandular systems, Orientals seem to grow stout because they are fond of their

food and their food grows fond of them, and it and they elect to live together in a happy symbiosis. This young man's rounded cheeks and dimpled hands suggested a tranquil and unregretted union with mounds of rice ashine with fat, and soup-platefuls of such Turkish sweets as hot butterscotch. He was doubtless thinking of his approaching dinner, and he had a right to take his ease, for behind him what was left of his wares was arranged with as much taste as the flowers in a Bond Street florist's. It was surprising, in view of that exquisite neatness, that he showed no emotion when his shop was entered by an extravagantly dirty old Albanian, who set about pinching all the meat between his finger and thumb. The prepossession of the West that a person who is neat will also be clean breaks down at every corner in the East. So the young butcher had nothing to distract him from the perfume and colour of the rose, which he slowly twirled between his fingers, and sometimes slowly raised to his dilating nostrils. He was so well justified, so thoroughly wise, in his enjoyment. If a turn of earth's wheel had brought a moment when it was foolish or dangerous to enjoy a rose it would have fallen through his fingers to the dust. But the purple-faced gendarme who had cried out his demand for perfection to the house, his iron-jawed men who had run about from bush to bush, they had committed themselves to their roses. They would have worked with sweat and without dignity to grow them. If there had arrived a person of influence who did not share their liking for them they would have disputed their point with him. It must be owned that they were lacking in repose and in discretion.

### *Skoplje III*

Skoplje reveals a difference between the Slav and the Turk, the European and the Asiatic, at every turn of the street, and as we went about on our sightseeing it revealed hardly fewer differences between Gerda and ourselves. There was, some time before lunch, a painful scene in a seventeenth-century church we visited, which is in itself an amusing consequence of racial differences. It is sunk deeply in the earth, because it was built in the days of Moslem fanaticism, when all churches must be set underground. That ordinance had been the fine

flower of Turkish spite, for the Turk loves light and makes his mosque a setting for it, but it wholly missed its mark, for the Christians liked their church dark, as good hatching-places for magic. Indeed, they still like them so, for a couple of women and an old man who were shuffling about from icon to icon in the darkness explained to Constantine that they had a special devotion to this church because of its mystery. Rocking and murmuring, they led us to its chief treasure, which was an iconostasis intricately carved with scenes from the Bible by three brothers, ancestors of the craftsmen who made the screen we had seen in the little church of Topola. This work is Byzantine in its recognition of the moral obligation to decorate, as extensively and intensively as possible, yet in its spirit it is purely peasant. When Abraham sets about sacrificing his son the boy stands in stockish obedience, as sons do in a good patriarchal society, and when the angel prevents him he looks up in exasperation like a farmer interrupted in a heavy job; and the angel's wings were plainly copied from a bird killed for the table, which was probably already inside the sculptor when he settled down to the secondary task of imitating the feathers. Gerda was irritated by this carving, both as a bourgeois and as an intellectual. "This is not serious art," she said, and went to the back of the church. There we found her when we came to leave, lighting a candle before a fourteenth-century icon of the Virgin Mary, which in its dim presentiment of worn melancholy was yet precise and radiant. My husband and I exclaimed in admiration, and Gerda said with extreme bitterness, "Now, I suppose, it will go to the British Museum."

I took it for granted that her attitude could be explained by certain factors we already knew: she disliked my husband and myself, both as individuals and as representatives of one of the powers which had conquered Germany, and she regarded us as traitors to the bourgeoisie. But after lunch we perceived that her distress proceeded from roots deep in her philosophy, of which we had not yet been made fully aware. Skoplje, which had that morning at every turn of the street illuminated a difference between the Slavs and the Turks in their way of taking pleasure, now revealed a difference between Gerda on the one hand and the Slavs and the Turks and us on the other, which touched a more fundamental problem: whether pleasure has any value.

We started the afternoon standing on the embankment watching the Easter Sunday procession which was making its way along the other embankment facing us on the opposite side of the river and would presently cross a bridge and pass us on its way to the cathedral. The sun was striking gloriously through the storm clouds on the cross and the vestments of the Metropolitan and the clergy who headed the long line of townspeople and peasants, and it lit up the crocus-coloured kerchiefs that many of the women were wearing on their heads. A gipsy girl so liked the show that, once it had gone by her, she jumped on the embankment and raced along to a point nearer the bridge to see it again, her rose-coloured trousers ballooning in the wind and casting a blurred image on the waters below. But the crowd near by were as entertaining as the procession itself. There was a group of formidable old men from some mountain village, each with the eye and lope of a wolf, and all with tender pink rosebuds embroidered on their woollen socks. There were some superb women whose fine and bitter faces were unveiled, and therefore must be Christian, yet wore the Turkish trousers, and strode along in a gait that knew nothing of Islam or, indeed, of Christianity but remembered a primitive matriarchy. There was a group of Tsintsari (or Vlachs) at a street corner sitting on their haunches, feet flat on the ground, buttocks on their heels, chins in a line with their knees, all steady as rocks, and playing with amber rosaries as they gossiped. But most strange of all to Western eyes was a detachment of men, in black uniforms, carrying rifles and wearing cartridge belts, waiting to join the procession under the leadership of a magnificent old man who carried the standard the comitadji always used in the old Turkish days, a black flag printed with a white skull and cross-bones. These seemed at first an odd addition to an Easter Day procession, until one remembered the logical consequences of a nationalist Church, and the complete lack of any association between Christianity and pacifism in these people's minds. But I was puzzled by the youth of many of the men in the detachment, which made it quite impossible for them to have fought against the Turks. They were, I suppose, Macedonian Serbs who had aided in the suppression of I.M.R.O. But nobody knew for certain, not even the friend of Constantine's who had just joined us, a Professor of Ethnology in the University of Skoplje. "I cannot

understand it," he said, "for the comitadji have long been disbanded."

I asked no more, for now the procession was mounting to the crown of the bridge, the cross-bearer was immense against the sky, and the Metropolitan with his tall veiled mitre was still more immense. As they turned the corner of the embankment and came towards us, each squatting Tsintsar rose upright in a single movement with the ease of a stretching cat. Gerda said into my ear, "Do not believe a word of what these people say to you. Of course there are still comitadji, the only difference is that they are now called chetnitsi. They kill and beat people as they like. All these Yugoslavs are lying to you all the time. I said to the Professor, 'But why do you tell them there are no more comitadji?' and he answered, 'They are foreigners, it is better that they should think so.'"

There was nothing to be said. Of course I knew about the chetnitsi. I had in my handbag at that moment a pamphlet concerning the doings of these Apache fascists in the Voivodina. It had never occurred to me that such an institution as the comitadji should not, when the legitimate need for it had ceased to exist, survive in a disagreeable and degenerate form. I knew that in America the guerrilla forces which had fought so well in the Civil War had not been easy to disband, and that the wilder members of them had become roving adventurers who had progressively deteriorating progeny in Jesse James, the St. Louis gangsters and the bootleggers and hi-jackers of Prohibition. I had not thought that it could be otherwise in the Balkans; and in any case it seemed to me that I, who am English by origin and of French sympathy, had little right to despise Yugoslavia for her chetnitsi when England and France, with far less excuse, had their British fascists and their Camelots du Roi, and that a German, whose fatherland was ruled by the Nazis, had far less right to exercise her fastidiousness. I could not answer truthfully for the sake of politeness so I meant to answer evasively; but I met Gerda's eyes and saw that she was blind to everything before her, to the procession, to the crowd, to Skoplje. Instead of sight there was the working of a cloudy opacity that wanted to precipitate contempt and violence, and whatever I said would have been turned to its gratification.

The procession reached us, the Metropolitan halted and shook hands with the old comitadji, and the skull and cross-

bones took its place among the religious banners. We saw them move towards the cathedral, and we started to saunter along the embankment, while the Professor gossiped about the holiday-makers around us. He showed us some peasants from the villages down on the Greek border, who could neither read nor write, but got the silly fellows who have gone to the bother of learning such stuff to tell them the commodity prices on the foreign exchanges, and on that information they very cunningly calculated what crops to sow. He showed us also a superb being, like a Cossack in a Russian ballet, who went strutting by in a wide-skirted coat made from the wool of a brown sheep. This, he told us, was a wealthy Tsintsar, a true nomad, who moved with his herds between summer and winter pastures and hoarded all his wealth, according to the classic nomadic fashion, in the form of necklaces and bracelets worn by his womenfolk. And he hurried us across the road to see a family of gipsies who were clearly natives of fairyland. Only there could a father and mother still shapely as gazelles and bloomed with youth have eight children; only there could they have arrayed their coffee-brown beauty which fastidious nostrils, secretive lips and eyes like prune-whip made refined and romantic, in garments of chrome yellow, cinnabar, emerald, royal blue and vermilion, which were so clean that they made the very sunlight seem a little tarnished. Never have I seen a group so ritually, orgiastically unsullied. "They are Gunpowder gipsies," said the Professor; "we call them that because they used to find saltpetre for the Turkish Army, and they are renowned for their cleanliness and their beauty." "But they are like Hindus!" I exclaimed. "They might be from the Mogul court." "They are something of that sort," said the Professor; "when Gandhi's private secretary came here he could make himself understood to our gipsies in Tamil. We think that they are the descendants of some conquered Indian people who fled out of Asia after some unrecorded catastrophe in the Middle Ages, and certainly these Gunpowder gipsies represent the ruling castes. But come, let me take you to our gipsy quarter, you are sure to be interested." "All, all is in Yugoslavia," said Constantine, glowing happily, trotting beside the tall Professor.

We went up the steep hill to the Moslem quarter, passing the cabaret where I had first met Astra, the stomach dancer whom we had seen at Sarajevo. Outside it were sitting three

of the singers : a great distended blonde and two dark girls with that beauty which those who have not got it think must bring its owners all they wish, but which actually seems to have a commercial value just enough to bring them into the sphere of commerce. They blinked into the sunlight, turning their faces from side to side, their hands tucked into the bosoms of their cotton dressing-gowns which were faded and stringy with washing and re-washing. Above all Slav life which touches on prostitution there is a strange lustral and expiatory cleanliness. We passed the sunken church we had visited that morning and the mosque garden, and came now on poorer and smaller houses. Suddenly we stopped, because a crowd of laughing people ran out of an alley and came to a halt just in front of us, turning their backs on us and forming a circle. They rocked from side to side, holding their hips and shouting with joy, while there staggered out of the alley, holding himself very stiffly, a gendarme who was very drunk. He was greenish, he held a wavering hand before his eyes to shield them from the sunlight ; it could be seen that for him his riding-boots were at the other end of the earth, his dead face muttered. Somebody cried out something from the back of the crowd, and a shout of laughter went up ; and he found that he could not put down the foot that he had raised. His other foot wobbled, and it seemed that he must fall. But just then there came out of a cottage a woman with an ageing and compassionate face, who went to him and caught him round his hourglass waist with an arm shrouded in a rose-coloured scarf. The crowd turned about, and walked off, as if the incident had now changed its character and was no longer amusing. She led him into a yard behind a house, and when we looked back a few paces further on, we saw her through a wide gap in a wall, pressing down his rigid body with long fine hands till he knelt, and then bringing his head forward by the temples so that he could be sick, all with a great piety of movement.

" It is here," said the Professor, just after that, " here is our gipsy quarter." From a rise in the road we looked down on a colony of one-storeyed houses that lay, a sharply distinct entity, on a spit of sand running for a quarter of a mile or so into the green fields surrounding Skoplje. The houses were whitewashed and many were decorated with simple stylised paintings of trees, some dark blue, some mustard yellow. We



had a clear view along one or two narrow alleys running down from the high road into this quarter, and we saw a number of people, all gaily dressed in window-curtain material, sitting on the pavements with an air of comfort and even formality, and looking up with intelligent but not impertinent curiosity into the faces of others who were hurrying by, swift and preternaturally sure-footed, never stumbling over those at their feet. They were all of them extremely Hindu in appearance, but their behaviour showed such a strange ease, such a lack of the constraints that are characteristic of every conceivable society, that the scene seemed illusionary, a stereoscopic presentation of a panel from a painted screen. "Look, are they not exotic and wonderful?" said the Professor proudly. "There are two thousand houses here, which means ten thousand gipsies." "Yes," said Gerda, her voice hoarse with indignation, "that there are thousands of them I can easily see, but the question is, why are they allowed?" "Why are they allowed?" repeated the Professor. "I don't understand." "Yes, why have you allowed them to come here?" persisted Gerda. "But, Gospodja, they have always been here," said the Professor, "they have always been in this district, for six hundred years at least, and most of these people have been actually settled here in Skoplje since the time of the Balkan wars." "They should be driven out," said Gerda, trembling with rage. She pointed at six children who were making mud pies outside a cottage just beneath us, under the care of a grandmother who had the delicate profile of an elderly Maharancee. "Look at them! They should be driven out!"

The Maharancee, who would have been well able to defend her own, heard the vehement accent and turned on us the veiled eyes of a hawk. "Now it might be agreeable to go to the gipsies' corso," said the Professor hastily. "But there," he added, "I must leave you, for I have another engagement." Every evening the Slavs of Skoplje, who are of the modern world, the functionaries and the professional men walk up and down the High Street that leads from the station to the chief bridge over the Vardar, and the Slavs who are of the old world, the artisans and the peasants, walk up and down a section of the embankment. But the Moslems and the gipsies have their corso at this end of the town, on the top of a hill, where there is a French war cemetery, crammed with the flimsy little wooden crosses that make them so much more pathetic than

any other burial-places. There is such an effort to make the crosses pretty, with the white paint and the touches of the tricolour, and they are so pitifully cheap, and the reason for the need of cheapness is so plainly the enormous number required. On the edge of this cemetery, fringed with beds of purple iris, there runs a promenade from which a hillside of grass and fruit trees drops steeply to the Vardar river, winding silver among its golden poplars and willows. An immense prospect looks over a broad valley at mountains, so well watered by springs that their pastures are like emeralds and their ploughed fields like rubies, and beyond them to a wall of snow peaks. Along this promenade walk many Moslem men, mostly youths, since their elders prefer to stroke their beards in the mosque gardens, some Moslem women, who usually come to sit in black clutches of three or four in the grass under the fruit trees, and many gipsies, men, women and children, who pass through the more stolid Moslem crowds with the slippery brilliance of fish. The gipsy women, though most of them are Moslem, go unveiled, which is an extreme example of the position their kind has won for itself as professionally free from ordinary social obligations; and this means that a thread of beauty, never troubling because never marked by profundity, runs through the crowd.

As we came to this promenade through the afternoon, that was still violet with the threat of storm and gilt with spring sunlight, we heard the throbbing of a drum that announces a kolo, a communal dance. Looking down towards the river, we saw that on a little knoll projecting from the hillside some soldiers were dancing the kolo in a circle of young men in civilian clothes, a knot of olive and black against the distant poplars and willows and silver waters. But there was another drum throbbing somewhere and we found it at the end of the promenade, where the ground fell away and there was nothing but a little plateau, wide enough for twenty or thirty people, on the edge of a cliff; and there the gipsies were dancing a kolo. Because they were Moslems and Easter was no festival of theirs, the girls were in everyday dress, and this was fortunate; for their best clothes are usually made of artificial silk brocades, which shine with a horrid yellowish lustre, destructive to the subtle loveliness of their complexions. They were wearing window-curtain material that had been steeped in sunlight and

rain till every crude colour was its own fair spectre, and the prevailing note was a light, soft, plum purple ; so their skins showed honey-gold, and their lips pale carnation. On the intricate rhythm of the music these girls and their boys floated like seaweed on the tide, just not quite freely, just tenuously attached to the solid universe. Their linked hands, which they raised higher than is the custom of kolo dancers, pulsed in the air, bigger than butterflies but more ethereal than birds.

Gerda said, "You like it?" I murmured, "Of course, of course." Beautiful boys and girls were dancing in the open air, wearing clothes lovely as flowers, against a background of snow peaks, trees palely incandescent with spring, and shining waters. Who on earth would not like it? Gerda said, "I do not like it. See, I have lit a cigarette. I must smoke here to disinfect myself. When I see these people I feel I am not in Europe." I said nothing ; it would have been so natural to say, "I wish to God that were so." She went on, "Why do you like these people? How can you possibly like them? Do you not see that they are dirty and stupid?" I looked at them again and marvelled at their bodies, which were as economical as a line of poetry. As I looked the music changed its rhythm, but it took none of these bodies at a disadvantage ; they hovered for a minute, then received the new measure into their muscles and their blood, and were at one with it. I said, "They have something we have not got." And I meant to add, "A kind of nervous integrity, of muscular wisdom." But Gerda said savagely, rooting out the double happiness of despising the gipsies and despising me, "You think that merely because you do not know these people. You are mystical about them, you think they have occult knowledge ; I know what you think."

She did not. Gipsies are, in all but their appearance, particularly what I do not like. I am told that these at Skoplje are the most admirable of their kind, reasonably honest and wholly innocent of the charge, laid against all other Balkan gipsies, of stealing Christian children and deforming them so that they make appealing beggars. But I am cold towards them all, largely because they are the embodiment of that detestable attribute, facility. They never make music of their own, but they take the music of whatever country they happen to be in, play it so slickly that they become the recognised musician caste, and then turn music into a mere titillation of

the ear, a pleasant accompaniment to an evening's drunkenness. There is no design in anything they do. On my previous visit to Skoplje I had attended their grand annual festivity, a whole day's picnicking in the huge football stadium just outside the town; and for the first five minutes I thought I had never seen a more gorgeous spectacle. After that I spent half an hour speculating if I found it more bearable seen with my sunglasses or without. By normal vision the atrocious smear of lustre from the coarse fabrics they preferred spread a smear of grease over the scene; though the dark lenses removed this they thereby exposed the monotony of pattern, the scamped craftsmanship, the lack of embroidery. Then I went home, understanding what the Scandinavians meant to express when they made their Troll-women hollow. A human being ought not to be too light, its experience should silt up inside it and give it weight and substance. But, all the same, when gipsies are so beautiful and do beautiful things I experience the reaction that all normal people give to beauty; and I would not that it were otherwise, for, like the Slav and the Turk, I value delight. But Gerda, intent on something other than delight, insisted, "It is because you are a foreigner, you do not understand these people. You think they are wonderful. But you are from the north, you should see that they are nothing but dirty and uncivilised savages, who ought not to be in Europe at all."

I began to walk away from the kolo, which I could no longer enjoy, partly because I thought the gipsies might notice Gerda's undisguised disapproval of them, and I made my way towards Constantine and my husband, who were going across some broken ground back to the high road from Skoplje. But Gerda hurried along beside me, saying, "I do not understand you, you go on saying what a beautiful country this is, and you must know perfectly well that there is no order here, no culture, but only a mish-mash of different peoples who are all quite primitive and low. Why do you do that?" I said wearily, "But it's precisely because there are so many different peoples that Yugoslavia is so interesting. So many of these peoples have remarkable qualities, and it is fascinating to see whether they can be organised into an orderly state." "How can you make an orderly state out of so many peoples?" she asked. "They should all be driven out." I quickened my steps, and soon we came level with Constantine and my husband. At

once Gerda began to reproach Constantine angrily for the repulsiveness of the gipsies, and for the shameful compliancy of his country in harbouring them. We stepped on to the high road in broken order, just in front of an old man who was on his way into Skoplje. He was plainly very poor. Indeed I do not think that in all my life I have ever seen anybody poorer. His coat and breeches were so much patched that it was hard to say whether either had originally been black or brown, and the patches had themselves been patched; and his broken sandals were bound with rags but, even so, showed his bare feet. He had been greatly injured by his poverty. He leaned heavily on his staff, and he mumbled sadly through his beard to the ground. Gerda walked up to him and stood in front of him so that he had to stop, and then turned to us. "Look!" she cried, pointing to his tattered clothes and his broken sandals and laughing, "if a great producer like Reinhardt had tried to invent a figure of misery he could not have thought of anything so dreadful!" I said to my husband, "I cannot bear this," and he answered, "No, you must cheer up, some day she will do this to somebody who will hit her, and hit her hard." Constantine betrayed all his sweetness of character out of loyalty to Gerda, and joined in her laughter; but she rejected this sacrifice and made an angry gesture at him. "Your Yugoslavia ought to do something with all these horrible people!" she said, and they went ahead of us loudly quarrelling over the gipsies and the poor. I turned round and saw the old man staring after us in stupefaction.

The road ran now between barracks that stood in gardens full of fruit trees, lilac bushes, beds of purple and white iris. Soldiers were sitting at tables among these flowers, some playing cards, some singing songs to the sound of the gusla, but very softly because it was now the evening, and it had been a holiday, and everyone was tired. At one table a young soldier sat between two peasants, his parents; he was looking at them reverently because they were his father and mother, they were looking at him reverently because he was their son and a soldier. On a balcony some soldiers were going through a burlesque of drill. We walked on, and the road came out on the naked hills, and we looked over the turf to the ruins of an aqueduct which was pre-Byzantine, which was built when the Roman Empire was still governed from Rome. But the first stars were shining

over the mountains, and dusk was already in the valleys, so we turned back, and saw the soldiers at the tables rising and stretching themselves and yawning, gathering up the dealt cards, picking up their guslas and going on with their songs without an accompaniment, because a bugle was calling. As we drew near the gipsy quarter we heard its polyphonic voice across the fields and saw a bonfire on its outskirts with dancing figures black between us and the flames. Nearer Skoplje still, where there was a steep embankment sloping to a little stream we passed the old man whom Gerda had used for purposes of racial demonstration, who was sitting on the grass in the cold twilight and, with an air of shame, which increased when he saw us, was washing his feet.

### *Matka*

After a ten-mile drive from Skoplje we arrived at the little monastery which is called Matka, or the Mother, because it is kind to barren women, though it is dedicated to St. Andrew. I was a little disappointed because last year it had been painted Reckitts blue and what is known in Scotland as sweetie pink, but this year it was plain white. "I thought we would have a change," the priest said. It is hard to imagine such a radical change being applied to, say, the parish church of Steeple Ashton without some letters being written to *The Times*. We looked over the monastery, which was typical of its kind. There is the outer gate, the orchard and paddock, and then the enclosure containing the church and the priest's little house and a building with a stable underneath and a staircase running up to a gallery with guest rooms opening off it. It was in fact something of a religious centre, something of a fortress where Christians could foregather without being sniped at by the Moslems, and something of a country club where the peasants could have their bean-feasts and be sure of decent company. This last purpose the monasteries still subserve: many people came out to Matka from Skoplje to have lunch in the orchard. We told the priest, who was a handsome and intelligent young Serbian, that we would do the same, after we had been to see another monastery a mile or so away.

Our path ran towards a mountain gorge along a river-bank that was torn by the rawness of some engineering enterprise;

on a wooden platform by the water we saw a score or so of white-capped Albanians, flung down in sleep. We passed through a little makeshift village, plainly built for workmen, which ended in a pretty house with a well-kept garden, where a handsome family were eating their midday meal. "Priyatno," called Constantine, using the Serbian equivalent for *bon appétit*. "Priyatno," they answered in chorus, the children chirping like little birds. The road became a rough path overhung by rock, the river a torrent running far below, the valley a narrow gorge penetrating densely wooded hills rising to barren peaks. On a broad ledge under dripping cliffs, here hung with purple flowers, among wind-swept trees that leaned laterally over the abyss, we found the little monastery. It was minute and in poor repair, but it had kept its frescoes. A bar of sunlight struck through a gap in the wall and lay on the anguished figure of the Virgin Mary lifting Christ down from the Cross, like a finger laid by nature on the corrupt spot which the animal world has contracted by its development of consciousness; its liability to grief. Bitter what consciousness brings us, yet bitter beyond anything the loss of it; that the painter showed us in the figure of Christ which was typically Serbo-Byzantine. In too many Western pictures Christ looks as if He were wholly dying, and as if He were making an unmanly fuss over it considering his foreknowledge of the Resurrection. But in all these Macedonian frescoes death is shown working on the body that is bound to the spirit of Christ, wringing the breath out of the lungs as a laundress wrings water out of a shirt, taking the power out of the muscles and nerves like a dentist drawing a tooth whose roots drive down through the whole body. There is demonstrated that separateness of the flesh which Proust once noted, in a passage which describes how we think in our youth that our bodies are identical with ourselves, and have the same interests, but discover later in life that they are heartless companions who have been accidentally yoked with us, and who are as likely as not in our extreme sickness or old age to treat us with less mercy than we would have received at the hands of the worst bandits.

"Are they not beautiful, these frescoes?" Constantine said to my husband. "You will see that in all these Serbo-Byzantine works the feeling is terribly deep. It is ecstatic, yet far deeper than mere ecstasy, far deeper than Western art when it becomes

excited, as in the case of Matthias Grünewald." "What is that?" asked Gerda, who had been quite quiet all the morning. "You are not going to tell me that the man who painted these wretched daubs and smears was greater than our wonderful Matthias Grünewald?" "No, no," said poor Constantine, "I only said that here was a different feeling." "Then what is the use of comparing them?" said Gerda. "I know you did it for only one purpose, to prove that everything here is finer than in Germany." We left them in the monastery to settle this disagreement, and went a little way along a path that led to the head of a gorge, but it was slimy with recent rains, and we turned back. "Oh, God, I am so tired of this!" my husband said. "It is all very well for you to say that some day somebody will hit her," I said, "but when will it begin?"

Constantine and Gerda were ready to go when we got back, but it was evident as they walked in front of us that he was still making every effort to placate her. "It is horrid," I said, "to see him being specially nice to her because she has been specially nasty." "He is preposterously good to her," said my husband, "but why is it that Jews like Germans so much, when Germans do not like Jews? You know, they were very happy in Germany until Hitler came; and I honestly believe that if you gave Constantine the chance of getting rid of Gerda, he would not take it, not only because he is a faithful soul and she is the mother of his children, but because he really likes her society." "I believe Constantine is moved by prestige," I said. "Most Western culture comes to the Slavs and to the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe through Germany and Austria, and so they respect everything German and Austrian, and are left with an uneasy suspicion that if Germans and Austrians despise the Slavs and the Jews there must be something in it." "What you are saying is frightful," said my husband, "for it means that there is no hope for Europe unless in a multiplication of nationalisms of the most narrow and fanatical sort. For obviously Slavs and Jews cannot counteract this influence except by believing themselves rather more wonderful than the truth can guarantee, by professing the most extreme Zionism or Pan Slavism."

In front of us Constantine and Gerda had stopped, just above the tangle of engineering works by the river. When we came up Constantine said, "I would like to see what is



going on here, for it seems to me that it may be something very interesting. For we are doing the most wonderful things here in Macedonia. If the Italians and Americans had done them the whole world would be clapping their hands." This is a boast for which there is a good deal of foundation. Until the war Skoplje was a dust-heap surrounded by malarial marshes, and most of the towns in the province were as unhealthy. Now many people brought up in Serbia or Hungary live here all the year round, with at most the months of July and August on holiday, and keep their health and spirits. This is the result of much competent engineering, often planned with genius. "So let us go down," said Constantine, and we started to look for a path. But before we could find it, a man with grey hair and burning black eyes hurried out to us from the house where we had seen the family eating in the arbour. Yes, we might see the works, indeed we must see them, for he was in charge of them and he could tell us that they were going to result in a hydro-electric plant such as the world could never have dreamed would be set up in Macedonia, that had been the wash-pot of the Turks, a large hydro-electric plant, a huge one, a colossal one; in default of another adjective, his hands fluttered across the sun as he explained its vastness. "A pride," he called over his shoulder as he led the way down the hillside, "a great pride for Yugoslavia!" Talk of an angel, as the vulgar say; we had been talking of nationalism.

There was a ladder to drop down; and we stood in the river-bed, drained now of its water, so that a dam might be built. Here it had been wholly overhung, so it was as if we stood in a cavern. Above us was the gleaming nudity of the rocks uncovered now for the first time since prehistoric days, and sculptured here and there by the eddying waters into whorls like castes of gigantic muscular arms; and in wooden galleries pinned to the rock face Albanians were working by the light of lamps that gave their white skull caps and clothes a soft moth-wing brightness. From them proceeded the ringing sounds and the sudden flares of riveting. It was entrancing to contemplate the state of their minds, which knew nothing at all between the primitive and hydro-electricity. The man with grey hair and burning black eyes was pouring into our ears explanations of which we could not understand one single word, since it is the flaw in the state of mind of our sort — hardly indeed preferable

to that of the Albanians — that we know nothing whatever of the mechanical means which condition our lives at every turn ; when Constantine interrupted to ask him if he employed only Albanians. The man with grey hair glared at us out of the terrible sober drunkenness of fanaticism, which is punished by no deterrent headache, expelled by no purging sickness. " Why do you call them Albanians ? " he cried. " Now all are Yugoslavs ! " In the dusk his eyes were flames.

I grieved. It is notorious that many of the Albanians who became Yugoslavs under the Peace Treaty consented to the change with the utmost reluctance, and that the Government was obliged to adopt an extremely stern policy against them. I use the word " obliged " because I do not believe that any government in the history of the world has ever conducted such an enterprise as the pacification of Macedonia without resorting to ferocity. But I suspected the manager of being one of those bigots who would keep up this severity after the time for it had passed. However, he went on to say, " I do indeed try to employ this particular kind of Yugoslav, because they are such excellent fellows. That foreman over there, you cannot believe how good he is, how loyal, how careful of the work and his workmen. I feel to him as if he were my brother." I had seen this happening before in Macedonia ; the irresistible charm of the Albanians works on all Slavs, even on the most hard-hearted patriots sent down from the north, and the ancient grudge is forgotten. Men are wiser than they mean to be, and very different from what they think they are. Looking round the echoing cavern, before we left it, the grey-haired man said, " It was hard to get the river-bed dry for the building of the dam, for there were many springs gushing out of the rock. Many wonderful springs," he repeated reverently, speaking more like a Serb, born with an inherited instinct for water worship, than like an expert on hydro-electricity.

When we were at the top of the shaft again we said good-bye to him, and the parting was deeply emotional on the part of the grey-haired man and Constantine. " You have done a heavy work for Yugoslavia ! " cried Constantine, shaking both his hands. " What work is heavy if it is done for Yugoslavia ? " answered the other. When we went on our way Constantine was still hopping and jumping with excitement and cried out, " Is it not wonderful what difficulties we have surmounted ?

And think what it will mean when it is finished ! The whole of the valley down to Skoplje shall be full of light, and there will be many factories, and we will be rich, rich, like Manchester and America." " Really," said Gerda, " one would think you had done it yourself." " Well, did I not do a little of it myself ? " shouted Constantine. " Did I not fight in the Great War, and was I not terribly wounded ? Did I not so buy Macedonia with my blood ? And shall I not then be glad because it is no longer the desert and shambles it was under the Turks ? " Gerda shrugged her shoulders and walked on with an air of cool good sense. Constantine threw himself in her path so that she should not go on, demanding, " Do you laugh at your husband because he has paid a price of blood for his country ? " My husband said, in a voice which suggested that he was also willing to pay a price of blood, " I think it is time we had lunch."

In the paddock a table had been laid for us under an apple tree, now in the last days of its flowering time, and the priest sat waiting for us there. At another table there was a party of young men who were getting drunk, not hastily nor greedily, but slowly and gently. The apple blossom was drifting down on our table at about the same pace. One of them was already quite drunk and was lying asleep on the grass, covered by a blanket. The priest had filled our glasses with some wine of the Macedonian sort which is good to drink but which tastes hardly at all of grapes, which might just as well be distilled from pears or quinces, and had set out some good rough bread and a plate of dyed Easter eggs. The priest pressed us to eat the eggs so warmly that I thought they must be all we were to have for lunch, and I took two. But there came some sheep's cheese, which, when it is fresh and not too salt, is as bland to the palate as its shining whiteness is to the eye. " Oh, there is more to come," said the priest, when I made my enquiries. " We have good food here, thank God, though we do not get such good fish as easily as we used to do before they started building the dam. But it is wonderful the snares the devil lays for us. It was through that fish that my poor old predecessor got into such trouble, you know."

" What was that story, now ? I've never quite got the rights and wrongs of it," said Constantine, who had of course never heard of it till that moment. " Well, the root of the trouble was that our fish was simply the best in the neighbour-

hood and we were famous for it," said the priest. "So when Mr. Yeftitch, who was Prime Minister before Mr. Stoyadinovitch, came to stay with the Metropolitan at Skoplje, the Metropolitan was very anxious to give him the best entertainment he could, so he sent a hundred and twenty dinars to the old priest who was here then, and told him to send back as much fish as he could. But the old priest was too old to fish for himself, so he asked a peasant to do it for him. And the peasant was full of the honour of the occasion, and said, 'Here is a matter of a Prime Minister from Belgrade and the Metropolitan, I must do the best that I can,' so he got a stick of dynamite, for though he knew it was unlawful he did not think there would be any question of law when a Prime Minister and a Metropolitan wanted a good dinner. So he got an immense load of fish, and he took it to the old priest, and the old priest said, 'What have you done?' But he was a very honest old priest, and he felt that the Metropolitan had paid for this fish, so he sent it to him, but as it went into the town the customs officers saw it and said, 'But what is this great load?' And they were answered, 'Fish for the Metropolitan!' So the police went to the Metropolitan, and said, 'But you must not dynamite fish, even though you are the Metropolitan.' So he said, 'But I have not dynamited fish,' and when the matter was explained he was very angry with the old priest. And as the police did not believe the Metropolitan, and as the Metropolitan did not believe the old priest, I do not think the matter was ever made quite clear to everybody, though it will be in Heaven."

There came then a tureen of very strong chicken soup, which we ate with great pleasure, while the young men at the other table sang a melancholy folk-song very, very slowly. It was as if they had put their arms round the neck of the emotion of unrequited love and were leaning on her while, preoccupied with her sadness, she led them to the end of the song. In the middle of it one of them realised that the music was in charge of them and that they were not in charge of it, and he sang a few notes with the force and decision of a sergeant-major. This aroused the man who was lying on the grass, and he threw the blanket back from his face. A flower petal fell on his face, which was clouded with a look of caution and guile until he recognised what it was. After the effort of bringing his hand up to his face to brush it away, his eyes closed again, but a

sheepdog that was nosing around the paddock came and sniffed him, and ran away before he had time to push it away. He began to feel that too much was happening to him, he sat up, he cast away his blanket and revealed that he was in acrobat's clothes, in a striped vest and shorts. Angrily he stared about him, saw his friends and shook his head, grieved at their condition. Alone he must assert control over this universe which was getting out of hand. He rolled over and began to perform athletic feats, to lie on his abdomen and slowly lift his chest and his knees from the ground, to bend backwards and make a bridge with his hands and his feet.

There was admirable cold lamb next, and the sheepdog came for the bones. "It is a good dog, a very good dog," said the priest. "He is wonderful with the wolves. Last winter my servant called to me when I was in church and told me she had seen him outside the wall fighting with two wolves, and one he had hurt so that it ran howling into the hills, and the other one had turned tail and had run down the valley with him after it. And I went after him, because he is a very good dog, and I found he had chased the wolf for three kilometres till he came to a village where a peasant shot the wolf. I had this dog as a puppy from an old woman they called Aunt Persa in these parts, and he has something of her nature. She was a comitadji, just like a man, and she had three husbands, and all she killed because they were not politically sound. One would go with the Turks, and one would go with the Bulgars though he was a Serb because there were so many Bulgars in the village that he felt safer so, and one would go with the Greeks. She was a nurse in the Balkan wars, but she fought as much as she nursed, and she was wounded many times. Then when she was too old to marry or to fight she became a nun and lived as a hermit in a monastery up in the mountains here, that is a thousand years old. She made a very good nun." I remembered Pausanias and his sensible opinion that the worshippers at a lonely temple who were always losing their priestesses through rape and flight should choose a woman, old in years, who had had enough of the company of men. "I used to go up and see her, and one day she gave me this puppy which her dog had had. But now she is dead, and the monastery is deserted. Last summer I went up to see how it might be, and the porch had fallen in, and in the paddock I saw twelve wolves. They

would not have been there if Aunt Persa had still been alive."

There came yet another dish, a curious and admirable mixture of trout and chicken. Our distended stomachs thanked God it was the last. When the priest had stopped piling our plates he sat with his chin cupped in his hand and his elbows on the table, enjoying the rosy pleasantness of the early afternoon. Behind us the drunken young men at the table confided themselves to another song which they sang so slowly that to all intents and purposes it ceased to have a tune, but simply reserved the atmosphere for its melancholy. The acrobat was now standing on his head with an uncanny air of permanence. "I would like," said the priest, looking up at the grey peak which dominates this valley, "to have a huge flagstaff planted in the rock up there, to fly the hugest Yugoslavian flag ever made." He cast a defiant glance at us. "I suppose your European friends will despise me for that wish. I said the same thing to a French doctor who was here last summer, and he said, 'If you were a Catholic priest you would want to set there an enormous statue of the Virgin Mary, but because you are an Orthodox priest you want to put up a huge national flag,' and I think he meant it as a reproach. But I said to him, 'You speak as one who does not know that this country was not for the Virgin Mary until our flag had flown here.' " The acrobat quivered, collapsed on the grass, and instantly fell asleep, and his friends began to sing "John Brown's Body". "It is an old song of our comitadji," explained the priest.

### *Skoplje's Black Mountain*

On our way from Matka we stopped at the ruined mosque which is a landmark on the eastward road out of Skoplje. It is a small and lovely thing, with a tomb almost as large as itself beside it, and it suffers gracefully the growth of long grass and yellow flowers on its crumbling cupola. Within, a score of ravens sat immobile on the iron grills of the glassless window, dark against the outer sunshine. I clapped my hands and they flew out, and a score more dropped from the vault of the cupola, and hovered a second, croaking a complaint, before they too went out into the light. We heard music, and when we went out we found a concert was taking place on the grass between

the mosque and the road, for a gipsy band, trudging its way to a village for the Easter Monday celebrations, had stopped for a moment to play to some holidaymakers in a cart. A man in the cart leaned forward as we approached, and threw a coin on to the tilted forehead of the gipsy who was playing the horn, and a roar of laughter went up. The gipsy was careful not to shift his head as he went on playing, so that the coin continued to stick where it was. This seemed to me most exciting, because I had read that it was a favourite diversion at the feasts of the Byzantines to throw coins on the faces and bodies of courtesans who were singing and dancing, and see how long the women could go on with the performance without letting them drop ; and as the gipsy played he was smirking and waving his eyelashes in the classic imitation of a courtesan. Actually it seems, apart from its historical interest, an unamusing habit, with an alarming implication that the Byzantines liked a pork-like richness of physique in their women. I even prefer the allied habit that Christians cultivate all over the Near East of throwing coins at certain icons and attaching great importance to the length of time they remain without falling. This is of course irreverent, though not more so than, say, Pascal's wager.

We took a road across the wide valley, through fields of young corn that were edged by the first poppies, and bumped up to the range of hills that is known as the Skopska Tserna Gora, the Black Mountain of Skoplje. There are a group of eight villages on it, of which only a couple are Bulgarian in feeling ; all the rest are strongly Serb. They are famous for the dour and fierce character of the inhabitants and the beautiful embroideries worked by the women : the thick, dark, tragic embroideries we had seen some passers-by wearing when we were breakfasting the previous day. They are very large villages. It is an odd circumstance that the disadvantageous political conditions of the Balkans produced an indubitable social benefit in keeping the villages large and compact. As the farmers feared raids from the Turkish troops and all the numerous armed forces begotten by the maladministration, they built houses side by side in some convenient spot and went out to their fields in the morning with their livestock, and brought it back at night ; so the most discouraging features of agricultural life, as we know them in England and America, the loneliness of the women and the development of eccentricities

due to isolation, are not present in the Balkans.

We came to the first village, a huddle of white houses with dark-brown roofs wedged in a valley rich with poplars, and found a great square choked with peasants watching their young men and women dance the kolo. They were certainly enjoying themselves, yet the effect was not joyful. The young people were wearing clothes covered with the most beautiful designs being invented in any part of the world to-day, masterpieces of abstract art, yet the effect was not of beauty. They were dancing, and yet the effect was not ecstatic. There was a profoundly depressing element in the scene, which was, quite simply, the women. The men were handsome, but nobody could have got a moment's pleasure from looking at any of the women. I have never seen a plainer-looking lot. This was partly because they were wearing head-dresses and clothes heavy enough to wear down the strength of a bullock. Where a good tradition has not kept the women's head-dresses to simple embroidered scarfs and kerchiefs, as in Debar and some other districts, they become shapeless piles of assorted haberdashery, mixed up with coins and cords and false hair and flowers; and I have never seen any more cumbersome than those of the Skopska Tserna Gora. Their bodies were padded with gowns of the coarse Macedonian linen which is said to be so thick that worms cannot gnaw through a shroud of it; over these they wore sleeveless coats made of rough serge, and many oddments in the way of aprons and belts, and sometimes sheepskin jackets over these. From the strained expressions on these women's faces it was quite plain that they were suffering the same nervous and muscular inconvenience that we would if we were obliged to go about all day wearing our bed-clothes applied to our persons.

But such head-dresses, such clothes, do not come into existence by chance. They are usually imposed by a society that has formed neurotic ideas about women's bodies and wants to insult them and drive them into hiding, and it is impossible for women to be happy in such a society. The pattern traced by the kolo confirmed that these women were the victims of such social persecution. One's first impression was that the kolo was very lively, and so it was, but only so far as the first half of it was concerned. That half was composed of men, who leaped and twirled high in the air, in the happiest abandonment



to the rhythm of the gipsy band ; the second half, which was composed of women, shuffled along with their heels never leaving the ground and not a muscle of face or body answering to the music. It is true that Slav women never dance in the same way as men, since the feminine ideal is the stiff and stylised Virgin on the icons, and they therefore prefer to posture rather than to trip, but this was a stockishness surprising to find anywhere but among the inorganic or the dead. It was exhibited still more grossly in the second village we visited, where they danced the kolo on a patch of sloping grassland beside a willow-hung stream. There it was as if the first part of the kolo were a broken-backed snake, the first half rearing and twisting in liveliness, the second half a limp length dragging on the ground.

It was strange, for the women who sewed these embroideries were plainly not lacking in the capacity for excitement. It must be that these women are not allowed to dance, and it could be read in their sullen, colourless faces that there was not much they were allowed to do. I remembered then that I had heard it said in Skoplje that on the Skopska Tserna Gora wives are so harshly treated by their husbands that if they are left widows nothing will induce them to remarry. No degree of privation could approach in horror that masculine tyranny. I also remembered a curious conversation I once had with a young woman who had washed and waved my hair in a shop at Skoplje. She was in her early twenties, she was pregnant with her second child, she rose at five and did the housework and got her elder child ready for the day, and then she worked at the coiffeur's from half-past eight in the morning till half-past seven at night, with a midday interval which she spent in cooking and serving her husband's dinner. On her Sundays she did the family laundry and made clothes. When I told her that this seemed to me a hard life she laughed heartily and said that it was nothing to what she would have had to do if she had stayed at the village where she was born, in the Skopska Tserna Gora. The men, she said with great bitterness, left all the work they could to the women, even if it were far beyond their physical strength.

At the third village we saw more than the dancing. The car we were in was flying the Government flag, because Constantine had borrowed it from the Ban of the province ; and it happened that the people here were not only fanatically pro-

Serb but wanted something from the authorities. So they broke into cheers as we got out of the car, an action I always dislike, as it never fails to mean that I have been mistaken for someone else. But still Constantine was a Government official, and this was enough for them, so after the young people had danced a kolo for us we were taken to the house of three handsome elderly brothers, who were the chief men of the village. It was the usual Balkan house, with a stable for the livestock on the ground floor and an outside staircase leading up to a balcony off which open the living-rooms. The men put out on the balcony a long table and two benches, covered with rugs. Several other important men of the village came in and were introduced to us, and we all sat down and drank musty red wine, and ate sheep's cheese and hard-boiled eggs, which the brothers shelled for us with their own hands. We were joined by the wife of the eldest brother, a woman of about forty, wearing a dress on which the Persian design of the moon tree was adapted to a Christian purpose, with her healthy and well-mannered youngest child in her arms; and I think other women were listening and whispering behind a half-open door.

When we had eaten and drunk, the men, who were all of dignified bearing and decisive manner, began to instruct Constantine in the message he was to take back to the authorities. It was cool and logical. Yes, it was true that they were having great trouble with another village, grave trouble. It was true that three men had been killed and one wounded. But it was no use sending gendarmes with instructions to keep order, for the trouble was about something, and it would not cease until that something was settled. It was not merely that the other village was Bulgarian; there was a real conflict of interests concerning the water rights; and as they all realised by now, the dispute had gone on for so many generations and there had been so much ill-feeling engendered that it would go on for ever if some independent person did not intervene and arbitrate. So would the Government please send a Commission to look into the matter at once? They had already sent a request for it, but they knew theirs would only be one among innumerable petitions from villages, and would probably not be dealt with for years, or at least months, and this matter was urgent. It ought to take precedence of requests for better roads or lighting, because as long as it was not settled there would be clashes, and

there was certain to be more loss of life. So would Constantine please inform the proper people ?

He said that he would ; and indeed the next day he did. Then these men of the Skopska Tserna Gora went on to talk of other matters. " And you ? " they said. " We can put our house in order if you put your house in order up in Belgrade. Are you doing that ? Sometimes we doubt it." They said that they saw the economic necessity of the pact with Italy, but they did not believe that it could mean much. " Those people have worked against us here in our own country, they have spent money like water raising up Macedonians against their brothers, they put bombs in the hands of those who killed our king. Why should they suddenly be our friends ? They will steal all they can from us. It is a pity that anything should be done which will make our young men forget that they are enemies and that we must be ready to defend our country against them." But they were still more perturbed by the pact with Bulgaria. " It is impossible," they said, " to make peace with the Bulgarians. They are our *non-brothers*." Then the woman with the child in her arms spoke, and all the men fell silent. " I have seen with my own eyes my brother and my brother's son killed by Bulgarians," she said, and the statement was even stronger than it sounds to Western ears, because of the special tie that exists between Serb brothers and sisters. " They killed them without mercy, as if they were not Christians but Turks." The words came down like a hammer. She closed her lips in a straight line, and the men began to speak again, urging the implacability of their enemies and its everlasting quality.

It was horrible to hear these primitive people speak with such savagery, and to realise that they were savage not because they were primitive but because they had been deliberately corrupted by the Great Powers. The prime cause of Macedonian violence is, of course, five hundred years of misgovernment by the Ottoman Empire. But it would never have assumed its recent extreme and internecine character, had it not been for England's support of the Ottoman Empire when it would have fallen apart if it had been left to itself ; had it not been for the artificial Bulgarisation of the Macedonian Serbs which was carried on generation after generation on money supplied by the Tsardom ; had it not been for the Austrian Empire, which was so ambitious in its *Drang nach Osten* that it created by

reaction : Serbian chauvinism which made Serbs not the most ideal administrators of a province far from unanimous in its desire to be administered : had it not been that Italy had perverted the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation by finance and villainous tutelage. What I saw was not the darkness of these dark men's hearts, as a hostile traveller might have imagined, but the announcement of their legitimate determination to defend the tables and benches we sat on, the musty wine and the hard-boiled eggs and the sheep's cheese, the woman and her child, the breath in their bodies, from the criminal intentions of the silly-clever in great cities, who fancied that the rape of these might secure them some advantage.

As we drove away, my husband said to Constantine, " Those were magnificent people. They had form, they had style. They were not at all overawed because you came from a big town, and they need not have been, because they knew what was necessary in town or country, to think clearly and put clear thoughts into clear words." " Certainly they were magnificent people," said Constantine, " they are what the Serbs were before the battle of Kossovo, they have maintained themselves in these hills for five hundred years without giving up what they have. Never were the Turks able to settle here, which they would have liked to do, for nature is everything to them, and it is very beautiful here. But when they came it was well with them only for a few days, and then they died. These men of the Skopska Tserna Gora, they could not be conquered."

Later I said, " It was strange how they all fell silent when that woman spoke, they behaved as if they had a great respect for her. Yet the women outside had the air of downtrodden drudges. . . ." But it was easy to see what happened. This was a situation common enough among individuals and among races. There is an attitude of contempt for women in general, a pretence that women are worthless, even though the fullest advantage is taken of their worth. At times that advantage is taken in circumstances so spectacular that it cannot afterwards be repudiated. The woman in the house of the three brothers had plainly proved her quality by some act of courage or cunning in the face of the enemy which could not be forgotten. Yet the general attitude of men to women was still maintained. All the women in the village were treated as if courage or cunning on their part was inconceivable, as if they were lucky to be used as

beasts of burden. This cannot have been agreeable, even to the woman who had established herself as an exception. If all Englishmen were compelled by a taboo to be treated as an inferior by all female beings over the age of fourteen, forbidden to move or speak freely in their presence, and obliged to perform all menial duties without thanks, an Englishman who happened to have won the V.C. would still not find life enjoyable.

Yet it has to be recognised that these men of the Skopska Tserna Gora could not be conquered. We must admit here a process that at one and the same time makes life possible and intolerable for women. If there is one certain difference between the sexes it is that men lack all sense of objective reality and have a purely pragmatic attitude to knowledge. A fact does not begin to be for a man until he has calculated its probable usefulness to him. If he thinks it will serve his purposes then he will recognise it ; but if it is unwelcome to him then he will deny it. This means that he is not sure of the existence of his own soul, for nothing is more debatable for any of us than whether it is a good or a bad thing that our souls should have come to be. That life is preferable to death is a conviction firmly held by our bowels and muscles but the mind has never convincingly proved it to the mind. Women, however, do not greatly trouble about this, since we have been born and we shall die, and even if the essence of our existence should be evil there is at least a term set to it. Therefore, women feel they can allow themselves to enjoy the material framework of existence for what it is worth. With men it cannot be so. Full of uncertainty, they sweat with fear lest all be for the worst. Hence the dichotomy that has been often observed in homes for the aged : the old women, even those who in their time have known prosperity, do not greatly distress themselves because in their last days they must eat the bread of charity, and they accept what pleasure can be drawn from sunny weather, a warm fire, a bag of sweets ; but the old men are perpetually enraged.

Therefore men must be reassured, hour by hour, day by day. They must snatch every aid they can in their lifelong fight against seen and unseen adversaries. It would comfort them enormously if they knew that they were stronger than others. But what others ? It would seem obvious to answer, their enemies. But little comfort can be derived from them, for sooner or later comes the battle, to settle the value, never

satisfactorily : for an enemy that defeats is plainly superior, in some sense, and an enemy that is defeated appears so contemptible that it is no comfort to be above him. There are, however, exquisitely convenient, all women. It need only be pretended that men's physical superiority is the outward sign of a universal superiority, and at a stroke they can say of half the world's population, "I am better than that". The declaration is the more exalting because that half includes the people on whom the man who makes it had been the most dependent, even the person through whom he received his life.

If the community is threatened by any real danger, and only a few fortunate communities are not, women will be fools if they do not accept that declaration without dispute. For the physical superiority of men and their freedom from maternity make them the natural defenders of the community, and if they can derive strength from belief in the inferiority of women, it is better to let them have it. The trouble is that too often the strength so derived proves inadequate for the task in hand. The women in the Skopska Tserna Gora were repaid for their subordination by a certain mitigation of their lot, which is proved real enough when it is compared with the darker misery of the women on the plains below, who suffered far worse at the hands of the Turks, but which was far from giving them security in any ordinary sense of the word. Intense and lifelong discomfort seems an excessive price to pay for this ; and they might easily have gone on working out this inequitable contract till doomsday, since their menfolk were never able to liberate their community from the Turks until they were aided by the Serbians, who were outside their sexual transaction. In far worse case were the Turkish women of Macedonia, who received nothing in return for their subordination except the destruction of their community.

Even when the men of the community derive an adequate amount of strength from the suppression of their women, the situation is ultimately unsatisfactory ; for it undoes itself, to the confusion of both parties. When men are successful in defending their community they engender a condition of general peace, in which people attempt to live by reason. Then women use their full capacities of mind and body, not because they want to prove their equality with men, for that is a point in which it is difficult to feel interest for more than a minute or two

unless one has an unusually competitive mind, but because in such use lies pleasure. In such a world the young woman and the young man dash together out of adolescence into adult life like a couple of colts. But presently the woman looks round and sees that the man is not with her. He is some considerable distance behind her, not feeling very well. There has been drained from him the strength which his forefathers derived from the subjection of women; and the woman is amazed, because tradition has taught her that to be a man is to be strong. There is no known remedy for this disharmony. As yet it seems that no present she can make him out of her liberty can compensate him for his loss of what he gained from her slavery. The disagreeable consequences of this are without end, and perhaps it may be counted the worst that there never can be a society where men are men and women are women, that humanity never reveals the whole of itself at one time. Until there is achieved a settled condition of world peace hard to foresee anywhere nearer than the distant future it will always be more necessary that the revelation should be male. Therefore it will perhaps be reasonable till the end of all time within imaginable scope, to follow the ancient custom and rejoice when a boy is born and to weep for a girl. But there are degrees in the female tragedy. It is our tendency nowadays to deplore as worse than all others the woes of the woman whom modern capitalism allows to earn her own living but deprives of a husband and children, since the wage-slave is an uncaring lover and a worse provider. But nowhere have I seen such settled and hopeless despair, such resentment doubled by its knowledge that it might not express itself, as on the faces of the women of the Skopska Tserna Gora.

*A Convent somewhere below the  
Skopska Tserna Gora*

It is said that many have been cured of madness by drinking of the spring in the orchard of this convent, and I do not doubt it, for this is a very pleasant place, and I fancy that in Macedonia, as in the rest of the world, the mad are usually those who have been surfeited with the unpleasant. We met the fat old abbess in the poplar avenue, and she said, "I am so glad that

you have come back to see us again," and there was written in her eye, "now that I have a rare, an inestimable, and sacred treasure to show you, far more precious than any icon or holy spring," for she was infatuated with the child she led by the hand. She took us up into her parlour and a nun was sent to bring us brandy and sugar and water, and she explained how she came to have this unique treasure in her possession. The child's mother was a French schoolmistress at Bitolj, and had sent her there to make a good convalescence after scarlet fever and diphtheria, a story which explained much that had been puzzling, for indeed this was the plainest little girl one could well imagine, a spindly little girl, an Indian-famine little girl.

"You must recite, my dear," said the abbess, "you must recite to the foreigners and the gentleman from Belgrade." She could not bear us to go home without seeing the prettiest thing we should ever see. So after the child had stood on one leg and then on the other, and had pleated the edge of her petticoat till she was told she should not, she repeated a Serbian hymn and sang a French song all about *les fleurs* and *la nature*, in the classic treble of the infant French voice, in the voice that René Clair gave to the morning glories in "A Nous la Liberté". When she had finished she stood on the point of her sharp little nose in the immense slopes of the abbess's bosom.

By now the young nun had come back with the brandy and the sugar and water, and she stood with her arms a-kimbo and her chin forward, adoring the child. "Who is that bishop with the very fine head?" said my husband as he drank, nodding at a photograph on the wall. I had asked the very same question when I was here for the first time the year before, and she had looked at the photograph and had said, "He is the Metropolitan who received me into the Church, he was burned alive by the Bulgarians," and her eyes had darkened. She had talked of the dead man for a long time. This time she said the same words, but her eyes did not darken, they went back to the child at once, and she said, "We have been here twenty-six years, never have we had a child here before, it is such a joy as I could not have believed." Perhaps the cock crowed, but it was in Paradise.



*Bardovtsi*

One wet evening I saw a gentleman wearing a fez come out of one of the Minnie Mouse houses in the new town of Skoplje and with a deep sigh, as if to him the world seemed more obstinately rainy than it does to the rest of us, open his umbrella and set himself to picking his way among the puddles. "That is the Pasha of Bardovtsi," said my friend; "there are no pashas now, but that is what he would be if there were any, and he is not anything else, so that is what we call him. But you must go to Bardovtsi, it is quite close, and nobody lives there now, and you ought to see what a pasha's palace was like." So one afternoon we borrowed a car from the Governor and drove out to a point in the valley under the Skopska Tserna Gora, where there was a thickly wooded village, and many people walking through air throbbing with distant music towards a festival, in white clothes and tall fantastic head-dress, dappled by sunlight falling through the leaves. We came at last on a patch of grassland and a great wall, set with watch-towers at either end, in which there was a ramshackle door in a lordly gateway. But it was locked, and when our chauffeur beat on it there was no answer. He crossed the grassland to a farm and called up to the balcony, but there was silence. Everybody we had seen had been walking away from the village.

Our chauffeur became very angry. He was a handsome and passionate young man who had never been denied anything in his life. He battered at the door till it appeared about to split and then it was slowly opened by an old man carrying a scythe, his hand cupping his ear. Behind him an acre of long grass shook its ears, and we saw beyond it the cool prudence, the lovely common sense, of a Turkish country house, as they built them a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago. The Turks and the Georgian English have known better than anyone how to build a place where civilised man can enjoy nature. The old man with the scythe said we could go where we liked, he had only bought the hay rights and was getting the grass in because the young people had to go to the kolo. "Yes," he said with a chuckle, "they have to go to the kolo, but all the same they know no way of keeping off the rain."

This acre of grass was one of three paddocks which lay

within the great wall, themselves divided by walls. We went to the door on the left, stamping our feet as we went, for fear there were snakes, and looked over more long grass to a solid profligacy of richly coloured bricks such as the Turks loved. There was stabling there for sixty horses, housing for an army of retainers. We went back to the house, a black stork screaming suddenly above our heads. But we could not go in. As we opened the door we saw that the staircase in the hall was barred, and for good reason. A host of ravens fled from the glassless windows, and when some lumps of masonry fell from a ceiling somewhere too many unseen living things scuttled and rustled on the floors where we must walk for real comfort of the mind. We were able only to look through the dimness and see that all the proportions were wise, that it must have been light without flimsiness, and firm without heaviness, and that in the heat the coolness must have been stored here as in a reservoir. Then we went to the wall on the right and through a gateway, and saw a house, only a little less large, that had been the harem. There also we startled many ravens, but it was still safe to enter it, and we went up the stairs to that delicious landing-room which is the special invention of Turkish architecture, where one sits in the freshness of the first storey and can look down the well of the staircase and see who is coming in and out of the rooms on the ground floor. It is the spirit of harem intrigue insisting that, to make the game more sporting, all the cards shall be laid on the table straight away. This room was decorated in the curious Turkish Regency style that is so inexplicable. It is hard to imagine why at the end of the eighteenth century, and at the beginning of the nineteenth, when the Turks were still the fiercest of military peoples, they had the houses decorated with paintings which recall the Regency style, not as it was in its own age (which would not be surprising, for some of our eighteenth-century men were terrible as any Turks) but as it is rendered in pastiche by Mr. Rex Whistler. There were on these walls pictures of Constantinople and the Bosphorus, framed with the most affected of swags and segregated by comic mock pilasters, which were not even Strawberry Hill, which were painted by somebody who seemed to be saying "How amusing it was when people thought it amusing to paint in this way". We went through the other rooms delicately, and we found that

there were bathrooms and water-closets, several of them, such as there cannot have been in a single house in England or France or America at that time.

We were wandering entranced in a world of delicate, clean people, surrounded by refined fragilities, when the chauffeur followed us upstairs. He had not joined us before because he had been catching a pigeon, which now fluttered between his two hands. There is a veil between the animal world and those of us who dwell in towns, but there was none to him. Wherever we were, he saw the animals as quickly as he saw the human beings who were present, the stoat or the lizard or the swallow fledgling ; and to the animals he must have seemed a god, so swiftly did he stretch out his hand to caress those he favoured and kill those in his disfavour. He looked round him and said, " Ah, the old pig ! The old pig of a Turk ! Twenty-five women he had here, the old woman says." He tried to say no more but his rage was too great. He whirled his joined hands round in a circle, the pigeon rattling its startled wings inside them, and began to shout. He was a Serbian from Nish, where they drove out the Turks only a little over sixty years ago. " And there were many of our Christian women that were brought here ! And they would not have children by our women ! Our women they made to have abortions ! They cut our women to pieces ! " Ravens of specially lethargic disposition fled croaking to the light. "*Aïde, aïde*, out of it ! " he cried, clattering down the stairs.

The old man stood resting on his scythe. He was proud that we had come to see the palace. It had belonged to Avzi Pasha, he said, and he watched for our faces to lighten. Avzi Pasha, he repeated. But nobody knows anything of him to-day for there are fewer archives here than there were in Bosnia. To a generation's conflict with a government, to a personality whose virtues and vices made half a dozen countrysides smile or weep, there is often no clue except some crumpled pieces of paper, mostly referring to religious properties. Avzi Pasha, the old man told us, had been a very rich man, a very great man, he had been so great — he waved his feeble arm — that he had even sent his own army against the Sultan in Tzarigrad. But that did not serve, of course. Till the Sultan fell before the armies of the world he did not fall. Avzi Pasha was driven out, but there was another pasha here, and yet another, and they

were all grand, but then the land was made free, and there were no more pashas, and the palace was as we saw it.

His voice grumbled as he said it, and I thought he might perhaps be regretting that the palace was not as it had been. I said, "Will you ask him if it is better now with him than it was then?" It had been only age and a day's mowing, that had made his voice drag. He threw down his scythe at our feet, he joined his hands and shook his head, and laughed at the simplicity of the question. "In those days," he said, "we did not know the harvest as a time of joy, half the crops went straight away to the Pasha, but then the tax-collectors came back, and they came back, and they came back, and they said, 'This is for him also. It is another tax.' We never knew how little we had." I thought of the Germans on the train from Salzburg. "If only we could tell what we had to pay . . ." It is that, apparently, and not the single great injustices, the rape of the beloved to the harem or the concentration camp, but the steady drain on what one earns, on what should be one's own if there is justice in earth, or heaven, that cannot be borne.

Again the chauffeur began to shout. "And the stables! The beautiful stables! The people had to fetch all the stones from a quarry five miles away for nothing!" "The harvest was not a time of joy," repeated the old man. "Never did I think," said my husband, "that I should hear a man speak of the Revolt of the Pashas as a thing his people remembered, I will give him fifty dinars." When the old man saw the coin he gaped at it, and bent down and kissed my husband's hand. "Would anybody on the Skopska Tserna Gora kiss my husband's hand if he gave them money?" I asked the chauffeur. "No," he said, "but they were in the mountains and these people were on the flat lands. They were defenceless against the Turks."

### *Neresi*

In a cab drawn by two horses named "Balkan" and "Gangster", we trotted out of Skoplje through market gardens where tomatoes and paprikas glowed their different reds, and climbed a road up the hill behind Skoplje that is called the Watery One because of its many springs. The cab was hardly a cab, the road was hardly a road, and the cabman was a man of

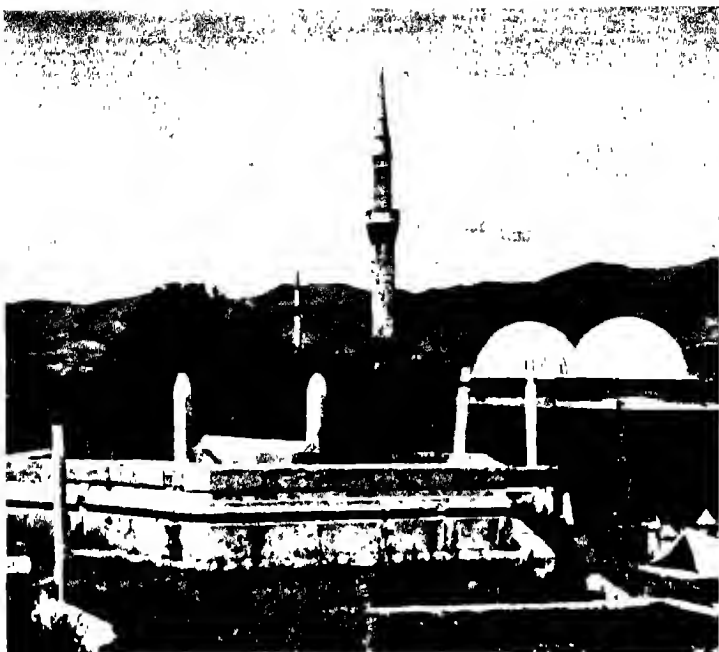
irrational pride, which we wounded afresh each time we got out of the cab because it was about to fall over the edge of a ravine. There is a lot of emotion loose about the Balkans which has lost its legitimate employment now that the Turks have been expelled. But it was pleasant to walk along the hedges and sometimes pick the flowers, and sometimes look back and see the snow mountains framed between the apple blossom and the green-gold poplar trees, and watch the Moslem girls who, with an air of panic working in their faces, whisked their veils over the face when they saw Constantine and my husband, who, on the contrary, were talking about Bernard Berenson. Also there was good conversation with strangers, as there always is when Constantine is there. An old Moslem was sitting on a rock beside a field of corn under a hawthorn tree, and as he was breathing very heavily, Constantine stopped and asked, "Are you ill, friend?" "No," said the Moslem, "but I am old and I cannot walk as far as I used to do." Constantine said, "Well, this is a very pleasant place to rest." "That is why I chose it," said the Moslem. "I pressed on though I was breathless, till I came to this rock. For since I am so old that my soul must soon leave my body, I look at nature as much as I can."

When we came to Neresi it was as I had remembered it, a rustic monastery, as homely as a Byzantine church can possibly be, a thing that might be a farmhouse, as it stands in a paddock, had it not been that there appear in it domes that are plainly bubbles blown by the breath of God. From the fountain at the corner of the paddock children drew water, dressed in their best for a kolo; the plum tree that nuzzles a corner of the church was in full flower; a small dog was chasing its fleas and in its infant folly transferred itself constantly from spot to spot as if hoping to find one specially suited to the pursuit. All was well in this world, and there came out of the priest's house the little priest whom I find one of the most sympathetic characters in Yugoslavia.

He is a tiny creature without sin. His eyes, which shine out of a tangle of eyebrows and wrinkles and beard, are more than bright, they are unstained light. He is an exile, for a tenuous and exquisite cause. He is a Russian monk, but he was not one of those who fled from the Bolsheviks; he belonged to the great monastery on the island on Lake Ladoga, which



NERESI



OUTSKIRTS OF SKOPLJE

is on the borders of Finland and Russia and exists to this day. He left this beloved place, where he had been since his early boyhood, to live in a lonely village, where there are more Moslems than Christians, in a climate that to his northern blood is abominable, because he would not consent to the adoption of the modern calendar. There had been a great many disputes in the monastery itself as to whether they should adhere to the old Church calendar, which is a fortnight after the ordinary world calendar, as the Orthodox Church in some respects still does in Yugoslavia, or should keep the modern world calendar. These disputes became so violent that the Finnish Government, a cool body mainly Lutheran in its origins, lost patience and bade the monks adopt the modern calendar or leave the monastery. So, for that and no other reason, did the little creature leave all that was dear to him.

Nothing, indeed, is more reasonable in the terms of his type of mysticism. On a certain day you will look up to heaven and think of the Mother of God as she was at the moment of the annunciation and she will bend down and accept your thoughts and lift them up in her heavenly sphere. What is the good of it all if you start looking up and sending her your thoughts on quite another day from that on which she has bent down to accept them? He felt as if he was being condemned to a lifetime of imbecile and heartrending activity, just as one would if every day one were forced to go to a railway terminus and wait for some beloved person who had in fact arrived at that station a fortnight before. I like such literal mysticism. It shows a desire to embrace the adored spiritual object and hug it till it passes into enjoyment of the boon of material existence, which is proof of a nature that would be kind and warm, and that would prefer the agreeable to the disagreeable. I think of the little man as of the old anthropomorphist heretic hermit, who was told that he must cease to believe that God was a person with a human body, having arms and legs and eyes and ears and must worship him as a spirit, and who went away with tears, repeating the text, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him". As it is easier to love an abstraction than a material person, since an abstraction demands no daily sacrifices, has no slippers to warm and needs no hot supper, this was to his credit as a human being, though not as a theologian.



We talked to the little man, and asked him how time went, and he said it went well, but he grieved, as he had when I saw him before, at the lack of fish. At Lake Ladoga he had eaten fish nearly every day, wonderful fish straight out of the water, and there was none in this village. Also he was used to tea, and here they drank coffee and the tea was not good. We asked him if he were not lonely, and he said, "On the whole, no, for there is God." Then we were joined by the owner of the flea-bitten dog, an elderly woman who had come here from near Belgrade because all her family, all her five sons and daughters, had chosen to give their lives to their country here. She was quite elderly; most and perhaps all of her children must have made this decision before the war, when it meant self-condemnation to an indefinite sojourn in an insanitary hell with considerable chances of sudden death. My husband and I wondered if we would perhaps find ourselves moved by some extraordinary reason to go to die where we were not born; but as both these people were sitting smiling so happily into the sunshine, to find an answer seemed not so vital as one might suppose.

Presently we went into the church and saw the frescoes, which are being uncovered very slowly, to wean the peasants from the late eighteenth-century peasant frescoes which had been painted over them, for the peasants like these much better than the old ones, and indeed they are extremely attractive. They show tight, round, pink little people chubbily doing quite entertaining things, as you see them represented in the paintings on the merry-go-rounds and advertising boards of French fairs, and exploited in the pictures of Marc Chagalle and his kind; and it would be a pity to destroy them if they were not covering fine medieval frescoes. When my husband saw the older frescoes I could see that he was a little disappointed, and at last he said, "But these are not like the Byzantine frescoes I have seen, they are not so stylised, they are almost representational, indeed they are very representational."

It is, of course, quite true, though I have doubted whether we are right in considering Byzantine frescoes highly stylised since, on my first visit to Yugoslavia, I went through the Sandjak of Novi Pazar, which is the most medieval part of the country and saw peasants slowly move from pose to pose distorted by conscious dignity which made them exactly like certain personages over the altars of Ravenna and Rome. But the

Serbo-Byzantine frescoes are unquestionably more naturalistic and far more literary. In looking at some of these at Neresi there came back to me the phrase of Bourget — “ la végétation touffue de King Lear ”, they are so packed with ideas. One presents in another form the theme treated by the painter of the fresco in the little monastery in the gorge ; it shows the terribly explicit death of Christ's body, Joseph of Arimathea is climbing a ladder to take Christ down from the cross, and his feet as they grip the rungs are the feet of a living man, while Christ's feet are utterly dead. Another shows an elderly woman lifting a beautiful astonished face at the spectacle of the raising of Lazarus : it pays homage to the ungrudging heart, it declares that a miracle consists of more than a wonderful act, it requires people who are willing to admit that something wonderful has been done. Another shows an Apostle hastening to the Eucharist, with the speed of a wish.

But there is another which is extraordinary beyond belief because not only does it look like a painting by Blake, it actually illustrates a poem by Blake. It shows the infant Christ being washed by a woman who is a fury. Of that same child, of that same woman, Blake wrote :

And if the Babe is born a boy  
He's given to a Woman Old  
Who nails him down upon a rock,  
Catches his shrieks in cups of gold.

She binds iron thorns around his head,  
She pierces both his hands and feet,  
She cuts his heart out at his side,  
To make it feel both cold and heat.

Her fingers number every nerve,  
Just as a miser counts his gold ;  
She lives upon his shrieks and cries,  
And she grows young as he grows old.

It is all in the fresco at Neresi. The fingers number every nerve of the infant Christ, just as a miser counts his gold ; that is spoken of by the tense, tough muscles of her arms, the compulsive fingers, terrible, seen through the waters of the bath as marine tentacles. She is catching his shrieks in cups of gold ; that is to say she is looking down with awe on what she is so

freely handling. She is binding iron around his head, she is piercing both his hands and feet, she is cutting his heart out at his side, because she is naming him in her mind the Christ, to whom these things are to happen. It is not possible that that verse and this fresco should not have been the work of the same mind. Yet the verse was written one hundred and fifty years ago by a home-keeping Cockney and the fresco was painted eight hundred years ago by an unknown Slav. Two things which should be together, which illumine each other, had strayed far apart, only to be joined for a minute or two at rare intervals in the attention of casual visitors. It was to counter this rangy quality in the universe that the little monk had desired to maintain contact between his devotions and their objects. His shining eyes showed a faith that, bidden, would have happily accepted more exacting tasks.

#### ROAD

We had had a number of bad evenings with Gerda. She was not easy in the daytime. A number of expeditions had been darkened, it seemed without cause, till I discovered that when we jumped out of the car, as we were sure to do quite often, to see a view or a flower or a kolo, I sometimes got in and sat on the right, which was where, she strongly felt, she ought to sit since she was the wife of a Government official. But over our evening meals she was at her worst, for it was then, after the business of sightseeing was over, that she was able to cultivate her ingenuity. Before Constantine came down she would try to correct any pleasant impressions of the country we might have received during the day. She would tell us, "You do not understand how horrible this country is. You think it is grand when they talk of Serbian pioneers. You do not know what that means. Everybody who goes into the Civil Service and wants to get a good post must volunteer to work here in Macedonia for three years. That is abominable. I knew a woman doctor and she came down here, and they made her go to the smallest mountain villages and teach the people about health and the care of children and it was terrible, the peasants were just like animals, so filthy and stupid. Do you call that right to make an educated woman of good family do that?" "But if one acquires territory that is not fully developed one must do that sort of thing," said

my husband. "One is bound to have trouble and loss until it is done. We have had to do exactly the same thing in India." "You have done exactly the same thing in India?" repeated Gerda. "Yes, there are many English people in India who spend their lives doing such work among the natives, both missionaries and civil servants." Then as Constantine took his place at the table, she said to him in Serbian, "Here our friend is telling us that the English do all sorts of philanthropic work among the natives in India. It is wonderful what hypocrites they are."

She robbed Constantine's talk of all its quality. It is his habit, a harmless one, to begin a reminiscence, which is probably true and interesting, with a generalisation based on it which is unsound but arresting. It is his way of saying "Walk up! Walk up!" and nobody minds. Once at dinner he put down his wineglass and announced, "I do not think, but I know, I absolutely know, that most men do not die a natural death but are poisoned by their wives." Now my husband knew, and I knew, and Constantine knew that such a statement was stark nonsense, but we also knew that it was the prelude to a good story. But my husband said, "Indeed?" And I said, "Do you really think so?" and Constantine began to tell us how after he had worked for some time in Russia as an official under the Bolsheviks, to save his life, he could bear it no longer and he decided to escape. First he had to lose his identity and this he did by picking up a gipsy girl and travelling with her for two months from fair to fair as a palmist, till he got down to the Roumanian border. Again and again while he was reading women's hands they asked him if he could supply them with poison for the purpose of murdering their husbands. Nature, it is well known, always supplies its own antidote, and if it is natural for men to feel superior to women it is also natural for women to feed them with henbane when this superiority is carried past a joke. This story is borne out by the number of people who have been tried in Hungary during recent years for supplying poison to peasant women. Whatever Constantine wished to tell us in this connection we did not hear, for Gerda said crisply, "Dear me, I am glad that I am in the company of clever people who can believe such things as that most women poison their husbands." "But it is true," began poor Constantine. "Is it?" said Gerda. "I am only a simple woman,

and I do not write books, but such things seem to me too foolish." There was then a wrangle in Serbian which left Constantine red and silent.

On all the occasions when Gerda had thus tied a tourniquet round the conversation, she would sit and watch me thoughtfully, making remarks in Serbian of which I could usually catch the meaning, which had always the same subject matter and style. "They must be very rich. Those two rings of hers must be worth a lot. But of course he is a typical English business man. Good God, how rich the English are." "But how stupid she is, how stupid! She cannot possibly be a good writer. But of course there is no culture in England." These remarks I did not translate to my husband, but sometimes she could not bear him not to know that she was being rude to me, and she would say something uncivil in German, and sometimes her rage against us would flood her face with crimson.

After we had been to the theatre to see Yovanovna, an actress who was an old friend of Constantine's, play the leading part in a classic Serbian play, she was so melancholy, with her hatred of us and England, so flushed and heavy with it, as one might be with the advent of a cold or influenza, that I went to bed early rather than have supper. Presently my husband came in and sat on my bed, and faced me with the air of one making a confession. "My dear," he said, "I am in the position of one who has gone into voluntary bankruptcy and still finds himself liable to imprisonment for debt. To-night I thought Gerda so intolerable that I made up my mind to get rid of her. Good God, why should we not have this holiday? All this last year, when we were going through that terrible time with your aunt and my uncle dying, we promised ourselves we would have this short time together, doing nothing but seeing new things and being quiet. Why should we have this woman who hates us tying herself round our necks? Besides, how do we know when she will not mortally offend some of the people that we meet? So I suddenly made up my mind at supper that I would stand it no longer. After all, we can go to Ochrid alone, and we can see what is to be seen, without Constantine. It will be less delightful, for he is the most entertaining companion in the world, but it can be done. I said therefore over the supper-table, 'There will be too many of us in the car to-morrow.' I disliked the sound of my own voice intensely as I said it, but I set my teeth, and

went on, determined to behave just as badly as she does. 'Three and all our luggage will be just as much as the car will carry. Your wife, Constantine, must travel by the motor bus to Ochrid, since you certainly must accompany us if we are to visit the monastery of Yovan Bigorski.' I believed that they would be silent for a moment and that Constantine would say, 'I am sorry, this arrangement will not suit me. My wife and I will be obliged to go to Belgrade to-morrow morning.' But there was a moment's silence and then they agreed. Now, I have behaved just as badly as she does, but I have gained absolutely nothing by it." I cared less than he did for the depressing moral aspect of the situation. I simply said, "I believe we shall have to go about with Gerda for the whole of the rest of our lives."

So the next morning we had an uneasy breakfast, and Gerda left by the eight o'clock bus, telling us bravely that she did not mind. We sat at a table in the street, drinking coffee and sheep's milk until the Ban's car came. A French journalist who was staying in the town delayed a moment to ask me whether I knew the works of Millet on the Serbo-Byzantine frescoes, bought some lilac from a passing boy and laid it on my table. Constantine, away for the moment to buy stamps, and my husband, away for the moment to buy tooth-paste, each met the same boy and had the same idea. An old Turk stood by and watched the increase of the purple heap on my table and over his face spread the thought, "These people are fond of lilac. They buy lilac. Since they have bought so much they might buy more." So we saw him go down a side street and look up at a small wall over which some lilac was bobbing from someone else's garden. There was a little negotiation with a barrel drawn from a neighbouring yard, and then the ragged old legs shinned up the wall, a ragged turban and a lean old forearm worked among the branches. He brought back a very respectable armful considering his age and the circumstances. It seemed hardly possible not to buy it.

A woman with a handsome face worn with suffering but not ascetic, showing a mouthful of gold teeth, stopped and greeted Constantine with pleasure, and I remembered it was one of the chambermaids where Constantine and I had stayed last year. She was glad to see us and showed it in a curiously fantastic and highfaluting way; and I remembered what Constantine had told me about her and the little blonde Slovene who was

the other chambermaid. He had said, "To-day my blind would not go up so I called them in to see it. But it was not serious, it was only that some plaster had fallen between it and the wall, nothing was broken. So I said to the chambermaid, 'Nothing is bad so long as it is unbroken,' and she said, looking a little wicked at me, 'Nothing is unbroken in these sinful days.' And then they both laughed a great deal, and they looked at my pyjamas, and said how gay they are, and if I wear such gay pyjamas when I am alone, how very gay they must be when I have a companion, and I say, 'It is not the pyjamas that make the gaiety when one has a companion!' and at that they were so delighted that they ran out of the room, and then they ran back again and laughed some more, and then they ran out again. And now they like me very much, for that conversation represents something wonderful to them, it was a high-water mark of delicacy that they will perhaps never touch again. For they never talk to anybody about anything else than these matters, because they have nothing else to talk about to people who are strangers, who cannot talk about local things. But usually they have to talk about them to people who make jokes that are too bad, who are rude to them, who cannot be counted on not suddenly to show their teeth and become brutal. But I did not say a rude word, I was elegant with them. I am kind. So months after, years after, they will say to each other, 'Do you remember the gentleman who came from Belgrade with the English lady, and who talked to us in that wonderful, witty, drawing-room way?' And it will be just that which I said to them." And here was proof that Constantine was right.

The handsome young chauffeur, whose name was Dragutin, said farewell to his wife, a slender dark child who looked like one of the Russian ballet, by chance heel-bound. We rushed through the broad valley, past the ruined mosque, past poppies and poplars and the last fruit blossom to the town of Tetovo, which stands among many apple orchards. It is famous for those apples; there are songs about them; you may know that the hem of the hyperbolic East has touched here when you are told that some of them are so fine that they are transparent and that when you peel them you can see the pips at the core. We went out and drank black coffee at a coffee-house in a dusty market-place, and the bald-headed man who kept it came up with a tray of cakes and said, "Did you expect to see

Dobosch Torte here? Did you expect to see Pozony here? Did you expect to see Nusstorte here?" and we said that we had not, and he said, "I will explain to you how this has happened. Once upon a time I had a very large bakery in Skoplje. I had many men working for me, and I backed the bill of a friend of mine for two hundred thousand dinars, and he ran away. So I had to sell all I had and start here afresh, and in a place that my wife hates, for she is a very cultivated lady, she comes from the north of the Danube. I have had to labour for five years like a convict, to face life with a clean forehead, and it is not even that I was foolish, for I was bound to back his bill, since in my beginning he had backed mine." He made us take some cakes for our journey, and a piece of sucking-pig. "For nowhere," he said, "will you find cakes as good as mine and there are few sucking-pigs like this. The whole of it weighed only eight pounds, and it is like butter." He mentioned food only objectively, but nothing is more certain than that he was a very greedy man. It was good to think that he had this consolation, living in such a remote place, in undeserved ruin, with a very cultivated lady.

On the outskirts of Tetovo we passed a mosque on the edge of a river which had a strange and dissolute air, for it was covered with paintings in the same Moslem Regency style as the harem in the Pasha's palace at Bardovtsi. Not an inch but had its diamond centred with a lozenge or a star, all in the most coquettish, interior decorators' polychrome. It languished in the midst of a sturdy Oriental wall, with square openings in it barred by wooden grills, very fierce and very rustic. Rain had begun to fall but this mosque was so curious a thing, so inappropriate in its contrast to its builders, that we sent a boy for the key and waited for it, though he was long in coming. On the other side of the river were ruins of a Turkish bath; about us faultlessly proportioned Turkish houses slightly projected their upper storeys; a little way off the house of a Turkish merchant, painted periwinkle blue, stood in a garden great enough to be called a park, lovely enough to be called by the Midi name for a garden, *un paradou*. Not a dog barked. The quarter was tongue-tied with decay.

When the key came we entered into an astonishing scene, for every inch of the mosque inside was painted with fripperies in this amusing and self-consciously amused style. There was a



frieze of tiny little views, of palaces on the Bosphorus with ships neatly placed in the middle of the sound, of walled gardens with playing fountains and trees mingling their branches as in agreement, and on the ceiling were circles containing posies or views of buildings, Persian in origin but as remote from their origin as is London of to-day, though they were all that nearer. The vaulting under the galleries was painted with roses which proved that there must be a Turkish expression meaning "too divine". It was like being inside a building made of a lot of enormous tea-trays put together, the very most whimsical tea-trays that the gift department of Messrs. Fortnum & Mason would wish to provide. In this erection a fierce people had met to worship their militant prophet. I understand nothing, nothing at all.

Out of Tetovo we drove along a road between wide marshes trenched with yellow irises, lying between high hills where green terraces climbed to a blue barrenness, streaked by snow. Presently we came on the motor bus, which had broken down. We uncomfortably felt it our duty to stand by till it recovered. Gerda was standing with a Turkish woman in her late thirties, in widow's weeds, who was fat in the curious way of beautiful middle-aged Turkish women. She did not look like one fat woman, she looked like a cluster of beautiful women loosely attached to a common centre, and she was multiplied again by her excess of widow's weeds, which were enough for the bereaved of a small town. Her smile advertised sweetness under a thick layer of powder, like Turkish delight. She was, she said, the widow of a Belgrade actor, going home to see his parents at Debar. The bus started and we went ahead of it to Gostivar, which is another town shaped by the Turkish luxury that has departed. About the market square, which was edged with rickety shops and characterless cafés and one Regency Moslem house that might have been a summer-house designed in our day for a lady of title by some international epicene, men walked about holding squealing lambs in their arms. We left the town and climbed up the mountainside to the pass, and saw how the comitadji were able to carry on their warfare, for we saw for the first time the Macedonian beechwoods and limewoods, leafy and stunted and dense. Under their green mantle an army could have its being and be invisible a quarter of a mile away. We stopped on the heights to look down at Gostivar, now a pool

of russet roofs dripping across the river to a lower shelf, with minarets and poplars planted by it cunningly, and at the valley that drives broadly back to Tetovo between snow-brindled mountains to the ultimate pure white peaks. Dragutin left his car and at once cried out, as if hailing a fellow-soldier, and pointed his hand straight above him. An eagle soared above us with a chicken in its claws. We went on and came to the pass, a marshy stretch where there was still winter, and the trees and bushes were bare. Cattle and horses grazed, and they were ornery; it is an American word but it was made for Balkan beasts. On the wetter patches storks stood on one leg, all facing one way.

At an inn on which a stork sat immensely and superbly, as if not knowing that it was an inn, but thinking of it simply as what it sat on, we had a meal of excellent fish. Then the bus drove up, and Gerda came in. My husband, who was transfixed with horror at this turn his device had taken, plied her with fish and bread and wine, and asked her if she had had a comfortable journey. "Yes," she said, "several people have asked me why I am travelling by bus when my husband and friends are travelling in a car, but I have explained that these are English guests and they had to have the most comfortable seats." My husband ceased to offer her anything at all, he retired into himself and suffered.

Gerda ate in silence for a time and then she addressed herself to Constantine. "The Turkish widow," she said, "asked me if I had been to see Yovanovna, and I said that I had. She asked me if I considered her attractive, and I said yes, quite attractive. And then she said, but Yovanovna is more than quite attractive, she is very attractive. She must be, for she has had so many lovers. Then the woman asked me if I had ever heard of the famous poet called Constantine, and I said I had, and she said that all the world knew that he had been Yovanovna's lover for many years." After a moment Constantine said sadly, "Ach, what a wicked woman to say that to somebody she has just met in a bus!"

Just then the conductor put his head in at the door and said that he had lost time on the road, and he must start again at once. Gerda rose and went, and Constantine followed her. "But the Turkish widow must have recognised Constantine!" I exclaimed. "Her husband was an actor and for years

Constantine was a dramatic critic, and anyway everybody knows him from the caricatures." "Of course the Turkish widow knew him," said my husband, "but what on earth can Gerda have been saying to the Turkish widow to make her land such a good one as that?" At this moment Constantine returned. He sat down and ate sucking-pig very pensively. "I have a very strong impression," he said, "that my wife would have liked to say something very disagreeable to me, but could not find what to say."

The road fell from the pass through a rocky gorge, sordid at first with rockfalls, which widened out into the valley that I had remembered as one of the loveliest things I had ever seen, where steep hillsides, far apart enough to be seen, fell again and again into the shapes that Earth would take if she found pleasure in herself and what she grows. Voluptuously the beechwoods stretch up to the snow, the grasslands down to the streams, the crags with their poplars and ashes come forward like the elbows of a yawning woman. There is a village on these hillsides which I think the most beautiful I have ever seen, anywhere in the world. It is called the Sorrowing Women, a name which in a countryside where tragedy has till now been the common lot, must mark some ghastly happening. White houses, bluish white, all built tall, like towers, and yet like houses, with grey-brown roofs, stand on a ledge below the snow and beechwoods, and around them grow ashes and poplars and below a lawn falls to the river. There is one minaret. A path winds down through the lawn. The village has a unity like a person, one is disappointed that it cannot speak, that one cannot enter into any relation with it, that one must go away and leave it.

A few miles further on was a monastery that I had to visit for a special purpose. It was no hardship. The view from the monastery, which lies high, is one of the best in Europe, taking the eye the whole journey from the snowfields to the springing corn, over sculptured earth that it seems must have been composed with joy. Also the Abbot is one of the most completely created human beings I have ever met. When we went into the galleried courtyard he was coming down the staircase from the upper storey, having heard our automobile as it wound its way up the hairpin bends through the limes. We knew he was on his way, because a servant standing in the courtyard looked up at the staircase and made a gesture such as might be used

by an actor in a Shakespearean historical drama to announce the entrance of a king ; and indeed the old man presented a royal though equivocal appearance, his face shining with a double light of majesty and cunning. He knew Constantine well, and gave him a comradely greeting, because he was a Government official. He himself had been appointed to this important monastery because he had been an active pro-Serb propagandist in Macedonia before the war and could be trusted afterwards to persuade to conformity such Albanians and Bulgarians as were open to persuasion, and to assist the authorities in dealing with the others. He faintly remembered me from my previous visit, and it crossed his mind that my husband and I might be persons of consequence, since we were accompanied on our travels by a Government official, and a child could have detected him resolving to impress us and charm us. But also the thought of the vastness of the earth, and the great affairs that link and divide its several parts, made his mind stretch like a tiger ardent for the hunt, because he knew his aptness for such business.

We were taken up to the parlour, which was very clean and handsome, like the whole monastery. It had been a pilgrimage much beloved by various neighbouring towns which had been prosperous under the Turks because of their craftsmen, particularly in the eighteenth century, so the church and the monastery have been richly built and maintained. The servant brought us the usual coffee and some wine which the Abbot, though he was sparkling with good-will, poured out for us without any marked air of generosity, for which I respected him all the more. I had seen him roll his eye round us and come to the perfectly sound judgment that my husband and I were too Western to enjoy drinking wine in the afternoon, and he very sensibly regretted that he had to waste his good wine in this ceremonial libation. Then we settled down to a talk about international politics. He expressed confidence in England as the only country which had remained great after the war, partly because he wanted to please us, but partly because he had collected a certain amount of evidence, some of it true and some of it false, which seemed to him to prove our unique distinction. The part that Mussolini had played in financing and organising Macedonian disorder made him regard Italy as a debauched and debauching brawler ; and he had an insight

into Hitler that came from his knowledge of the comitadji. He recognised that Hitler was one of those who preferred to send out others to fight rather than to fight himself, and that the Nazis were the kind of rebels who forget that the aim of any rebellion should be to establish order. "They are unrulers, Hitler and Mussolini," he said. A sudden thunder working in his eye, he said, "I am sure that Hitler does not believe in God"; and he added, after a minute, as if someone had objected that perhaps there was no God, "Well, what will a man like that believe in if he does not believe in God? Nothing good, it is certain." I think that in a single second he had boxed the compass, and passed from religious passion to scepticism and back again to faith though now of a more prudential sort.

I noticed all this through a haze of pleasure caused by the man's immense animal vigour, and his twinkling charm, which was effective even when it was realised to be voluntary. His disingenuousness failed to repel for the same reason that made it transparently obvious. It was dictated by some active but superficial force in the foreground of his mind; but a fundamental sincerity, of the inflexible though not consciously moral sort found in true artists, watched what he was doing with absolute justice. All his intellectual processes were of a hard ability, beautiful to watch, but it was surprising to find that they were sometimes frustrated by his lack of knowledge. "France," he said, "is utterly decadent. It must be so, for she is atheist and communist." "But indeed you are mistaken!" I exclaimed. "I know France well, and the country is full of life, a sound and sober and vigorous life." "If it interests you," said my husband, "French literature has not for long been so generally inspired by the religious spirit as it is to-day; and France is not communist but democratic." "But democracy is an evil thing," said the Abbot, assuming a sublime expression of prophetic wisdom, "it is always the beginning of communism." To hurry past this occasion for disagreement he began to talk about Mr. Gladstone and all that he had done for the South Slavs in their struggle with the Turks. This is a subject about which I never feel at ease, for I am not sure that Mr. Gladstone would have retained his enthusiasm for the Balkan Christians if he had really known them. Their eagerness not to be more sinned against than sinning if they could possibly help it, which was actually a most healthy reaction to

their lot, might have repelled his ethical austerity. But I forgot my embarrassment in wondering whether the Abbot knew that Mr. Gladstone had been a leader of a democratic party. The answer was, of course, that he did not. His life had been spent in a continuous struggle for power, which had given him no time to pursue knowledge that was not of immediate use to him ; and indeed such a pursuit would have been enormously difficult in his deprived and harried environment. But his poetic gift of intuitive apprehension, which was great, warned him how much there was to be known, and how intoxicating it would be to experience such contact with reality ; and that perhaps accounted for his restlessness, his ambiguity, the perpetual splitting and refusion of his personality.

The Abbot showed us the church, which was very rich, with a gorgeously carved iconostasis and some ancient treasure ; and as he closed the door he said to Constantine, " Of course the English have no real religious instinct, but they approve of religion because it holds society together." He wagged his beard gravely, infatuated with his dream that it is negotiation which makes the world go round. As we crossed the courtyard he halted and called angrily to his servant, pointing to a broken jar that lay among its oil on the cobbles. My eye was caught by the grime on his hand, and I could no longer contain my curiosity. I asked Constantine, " How is it that the Abbot is himself dirty when the monastery is so clean, and he obviously has a passion for order ? " He answered, " He does it to be popular, because the older peasants think that a priest ought to be dirty if he is a really holy man," answered Constantine ; " it is all the same to him, he would be clean if they wanted it." " What does she want to know ? " asked the Abbot. " She is wondering what you were before you were a monk," invented Constantine. The Abbot glittered with his memories. " I was all," he said.

He took us out on a gallery that overhung the famous view. Under snow ridges the woods were a bronze and red mist, and lower down were green and shone like wet paint ; then came the wide bosom of the terraced hillside, with its scattered villages white among their fruit trees and poplars. " How I would love to walk on that long snow ridge ! " exclaimed my husband. " The Englishman says he would like to be up there on the snow," said Constantine, " I believe he does that sort

of thing in Switzerland." "Tell him I have been there many times," said the Abbot, "there is not a peak in these parts I have not climbed." He looked at them, snorting with the aerial voluptuousness of the mountaineer, and his pectoral cross stirred on his cassock and gave out brilliance from its jewels. "That is a fine cross," said Constantine, and there followed a conversation from which it emerged, though at first not at all clearly, that it was a kind of cross which could be worn only by a monk on whom the Patriarch had conferred a certain honour, and that the Abbot had earned that honour the previous year, by inspiring some peasants in the neighbourhood to rebuild a ruined monastery: but that the cross was not a new possession, since he had bought it years before, when he had first taken orders, in the anticipation of rising to great heights in the Church. He admitted it with a certain reluctance, as if he knew ambition was too strong in him, but went on to say that what he must do next was to re-convert certain Serb villages which in the last years of Turkish oppression had become Moslem and taken to speaking Albanian. He pointed to a village on the hillside opposite. "You see the minaret? It means nothing. Five years ago I made them see reason, and they turned the mosque into a church." There was the expertise of Tammany about him.

Before we left Constantine told us that the pious peasant women of the district gave the monastery garments which they had worked to be sold to visitors from other parts of the country, who found the regional designs a novelty; and I asked, "May we buy some?" "That I am sure you can do," answered Constantine, "but I think he will charge you a great deal." When the Abbot heard what we wanted he opened a large cupboard, which was stuffed with these offerings, picked from here and from there, and spread what he had taken on the floor. This choice betrayed his characteristic dualism. It was made with an infallible taste, with the most profound wisdom about beauty; as I satisfied myself later, he had brought us out the best of his store. But his movements showed a certain contempt for the garments he handled and for us. It was evident that with his intellect he despised beauty, perhaps because of the incalculability which makes it useless to ambition. He watched us with real and radiant charm as well as a sneer while we put by a pair of woollen stockings knitted in a brilliant

flower pattern, an apron woven in crimsons and purples, and a Debar head-dress of fine white linen embroidered in colours with crosses inscribed within circles.

As we turned over the heap to make some other purchases Dragutin put his head round the door and said, "I have come to see what all of you are doing, for it is time we were on our way to Ochrid, if we are to get there before dark." It could be seen from the greeting the Abbot gave him that they were on terms which were familiar but not good. As Dragutin was a strong pro-Yugoslav and had taken part in the guerilla war against I.M.R.O. in this very district, he had probably often visited this monastery: and in the discontent there was between them one saw the sag of the *Führerprinzip*, the tendency of all leaders to sit about between performances among their followers, accepting their praise until the weaker of them become sycophants and sending them on inglorious errands until the more villainous of them become parasites, hardening against the nobler of them because of their unamenability, and sometimes reacting in fury against the basely amenable because of the treachery to the first high hopes of the cause. There had evidently been a matter of favours rescinded, or of services withheld, and perhaps a combination of both. "You have chosen well," said Dragutin, looking at the garments on the floor. Without the slightest self-consciousness, since he was a manly young Serb, he coiffed his head with the Debar kerchief and tied the apron round his waist, and looked as much like a beautiful young girl as he could. "Do not our women dress themselves handsomely?" he asked in pride.

The Abbot watched him closely. He was pleased because young Yugoslavs were so upstanding and so decent, displeased because of the recollection of some offence against authority, which half of him admitted to have been justified. Moved by the desire to be friends again with this brave and honest young man, he turned back to the cupboard, groped for a minute or two, and took out a long linen sash, dyed red. "For you," he said to Dragutin; but his duplicity, which as always was quite transparent, revealed that in his heart there passed the words, "I must make this young man feel liking for me again, it is not safe to have him as an enemy." "Ha, ha, I'm in luck!" cried Dragutin, stripping off his kerchief and the apron, and winding the sash round and round his slim waist in bullfighter



fashion. But he did not really forgive, and I had an impulse to be carping and resentful. The Abbot had made us as dualist as himself. For while we were criticising him our sense of his superiority overarched us like a sort of fatherhood. Dragutin and I alike would have been amazed if his courage or his cunning had failed, and in time of danger we would run into the palm of his hand. We knew quite well that he cared for nothing but an idea, and that his heart regarded his own ambition without approval. If his ways were tortuous those of nature are not less so, as the geneticist and the chemist knows them. To reject this man was to reject life, though to accept him wholly would have been to doom life to be what it is for ever.

Before we left the Abbot thanked me again for the gift I had brought him, which was a signed photograph of Mr. Lloyd George, a statesman for whom he felt a passionate devotion, and who had sent it with sympathetic good-will. Dragutin could not stop talking about him for long after we had driven away. "Did you have enough of him?" he asked. "A good priest he is not. Bad priests there are in our Church, and good priests, and I know which he is. Once I went up to that monastery and I said, 'Father, I am hungry. What have you got to give me to eat?' and he said, 'Nothing.' But I knew where to look, and there I found a most beautiful little chicken, and I ate it all up. The Abbot came in as I was finishing it, and he was very angry. He said, 'Dragutin, you are a bad man,' and I said, 'No, I am not a bad man, but I *was* a hungry man.' " It is not easy to imagine this exchange taking place between a rural dean and a chauffeur in England. But in Orthodox Yugoslavia a monastery is still what it was in primitive times and under the Turks, a church where a Christian can pray, a place where he can picnic with his friends, a refuge where he can ask for a meal and a bed. Anybody can go to a monastery and sleep and eat there for three days. Not only in theory but in a considerable measure of fact the church is a socialist institution.

"I bet," said Dragutin, as the road wound along between two walls covered with the spilling greenness of limewoods, on which villages rested like white birds with spread wings, "that the Abbot did not give you his best wine. That he keeps for the good of his own soul." "But we did not want his best wine," said Constantine. Dragutin thought for a long time

and said, "That's not the point. A priest should want to give you his best wine, whether you want it or not." Now we came out on a rougher valley, where the river ran strongly, into a smell of sulphur that became a reek and, at a point where hot springs fell to it over a cliff, a suffocation. "They're fine baths," said Dragutin, "and you can stay at the hotel beside the falls for ten dinars a day." "Tenpence a day! How can that be?" asked Constantine. "Oh, easy enough," said Dragutin, "here a hotel-keeper can buy a lamb for twenty dinars, feed his guests, and sell the skin for ten dinars. Yai! The ways I could make money if I had nine lives!"

The valley broadened to wide Biblical plains, stretching to distant mountains that were of no colour and all colours. The ground we looked on was sodden with blood and tears, for we were drawing near the Albanian frontier, and there are few parts of the world that have known more politically induced sorrow. Here the Turks fostered disorder, lest their subjects should unite against them, and here after the war Albanians and Bulgarians fought against incorporation in Yugoslavia and had to be subdued by force. There was no help for it, since the Yugoslavs had to hold this district if they were to defend themselves against Italy. But to say that the conflict was inevitable is not to deny that it was hideous. This land, by a familiar irony, is astonishing in its beauty. Not even Greece is lovelier than this corner of Macedonia. Now a violet storm massed low on the far Albanian mountains, and on the green plains at their feet walked light, light that was pouring through a hole in the dark sky, but not as a ray, as a cloud, not bounded yet definite, a formless being which was very present, as like God as anything we may see. It is a land made for the exhibition of mysteries, this Macedonia. Here is made manifest a chief element in human disappointment, the discrepancy between our lives and their framework. The earth is a stage exquisitely set; too often destiny will not let us act on it, or forces us to perform a hideous melodrama. Our amazement is set forth here in Macedonia in these tragically sculptured mountains and forests, in the white village called the Sorrowing Women, in the maintained light that walked as God on the fields where hatreds are like poppies among the corn.

Constantine cried as we took a road to the right, "Where are you taking us, Dragutin? This is not the way to Ochrid."

"No," answered Dragutin, "but it is the road to Debar, and they must see Debar, of which it was said, 'If Constantinople is burned down Debar can build it up again,' Debar which is now in Yugoslavia." "Perhaps you are right," said Constantine, "also it seems to me that I once drank wine in Debar, and that it was good. We may perhaps find a bottle." "I think you must have been young and happy when you drank it," said Dragutin, "for the wine here is not very good. But we can try it." Low on the hillside facing the plains and the Albanian mountains, lay our Debar: a double town, its white houses collected in an upper pool and a lower one, its minarets and its poplars placed so that the heart contracted, and it became an anguish to think that one would not be able to recollect perfectly its perfection. Within the town we found an elegance that made the luxury of Tetovo and Gostivar seem mere fumbling, and we perceived that this place had been the subject of a miracle for which all artists would pray, though they might be much relieved if their prayers were not answered. In the early middle ages it was famous for its craftsmen, for its goldsmiths and its silversmiths, its woodcarvers and weavers and embroiderers; and when the Turks came against them they were lost only to be saved, for they were immured with their tradition at its height. They were thus protected for five centuries from the grossness which infected their fellow-workmen in the West when life became commercial and ideas confused. I could not find out whether metal-work of the highest order was still carried on in Debar, but up till the Balkan wars it had craftsmen who could work gold and silver in the Byzantine manner. All over the Balkans there are to be found on altars Debar crosses, which enclose minute and living sculptures of the life of Christ in filigree which is not trivial, which has the playful vital purpose of tendrils. Some of the men who made these have been dead since the fourteenth century, others still live.

All the city breathes of instruction by a gifted past. At least one out of every three women wears the Debar head-dress, and of these white veils spotted with scarlet or crimson circles inscribed with crosses in purple or some other shade of red, almost none fails to be a masterpiece of abstract design. It is not written that men or groups should achieve such perfection by the first efforts of their eyes and hands; it is the fruit of more failures than are within the scope of one generation. And this

tradition is visible not only in the special talents of the town but in its general air of urbanity. It lies on the wild frontiers of Albania, and through the streets run the cold torrents shed by the snows of the peaks above, where generation after generation of men whom tyranny had turned to wolves lurked and raided, yet here the people moved as the citizens of great cities should but do not, treading neatly on fine narrow feet, carrying their heads neither too high nor too low, not staring at the stranger and coldly lowering their eyes should he stare. They walked between houses worthy of them, which spoke of good living as proudly as any Georgian mansion, but with the voice of ghosts, for the roofs were buckling and the windows broken and boarded, and the wild grasses grew long in their gardens. There lay on this lovely town the shadow of ruin which must deepen, which could never pass. It was not conceivable that history could take any turn which should restore Debar to prosperity. Its beauty was the spilled sweetness from a cup that had been overturned, utterly emptied, and shattered. On the plains the light walked no more, and the green hills round the town, pricked askew with the white tombs of the careless Moslem dead, seemed to be saying a final word. In a country where death devoured that which most deserved to live, the Abbot's lechery for life, his determination to defend it by cunning could be seen as precious.

### *Ochrid I*

Ochrid is a very long way from London. One gets into a train in London at two o'clock in the afternoon and all the next day one crosses Italy or Austria, and on the morning of the second day one is in Belgrade. Even if one stays in the Athens express one cannot be in Skoplje before five that afternoon. There one must spend the night, and start early in the morning to reach Ochrid in the late afternoon. It is also a fact that not one in a million Englishmen has been to Ochrid. What happened when we arrived at the hotel on Lake Ochrid, therefore, was unfair. We found Gerda talking to a manageress, one of those strange polyglots who seem to have been brought up in some alley where several civilisations put out their ash-cans, since only bits and pieces have come their way, never the real

meat. She showed some interest when she heard we were English. An Englishman had come to the hotel only the other day. Did we know Professor So-and-so? Yes, we knew that ornament of the British academic world. He had liked Ochrid trout, all the world liked Ochrid trout, we would like Ochrid trout, but first would we like a risotto of crayfish, such as the Professor had also liked? Yes, we thought we would. And were we really married, or did we want two rooms with a communicating door, like Professor So-and-so and his young secretary? "My God," said my husband, with deep emotion, "if I had a son I would tell him this story several times a year."

I had remembered this hotel at Ochrid, so strange, like the word "hotel" acted by children in a charade, and this year it seemed stranger. We were the only guests and the restaurant was not open, nor the electric light connected, so Constantine and Gerda and my husband and I ate a dinner which was superb by any standards, which was as good as the Filet de Sole in Brussels, in a bedroom where four beds were made up, lit by a profligacy of candles stuck in bottles, with the wine cooling in the wash-basin. When Dragutin came for next morning's orders the sight enchanted him and he stood gripping the door-posts and shouting with laughter. "Thus well lived the Turks!" he said.

In the morning I woke late and found my husband standing beside me and the room full of the smell of new bread. It is one of the peculiarities of Ochrid that, though it is a very poor town, all day long little boys run about with trays of delicious rolls made from fine white flour. We went out and ate them with our coffee sitting under a tree on the lakeside promenade outside the hotel. But it was bleak. It was with politeness that my husband looked across the bay at the old town, which lies tortoise-wise on a cape, under a hill crowned with a ruined fortress, built by Byzantines and Slavs and Normans and Turks on a Roman foundation. I had told him that it was one of the most interesting towns in Europe, a city which could, like Assisi, claim to be not wholly built by hands. It was a huddle of discoloured houses under a low sky that seemed to have sunk so low that it had been muddied. The hills, which I had remembered as austere sculptures, were now earth that when earth's capacity for loutishness became exhausted, became scrub-covered rock. The opposite coast of the lake, which is Albania,

could not be seen at all, and the water was dead as a pond in a public park.

I said, "We can see nothing of the place to-day; this is the sort of thing that Mrs. Eddy, probably quite correctly, ascribed to 'malicious animal magnetism,' but it will be all right when we get to the church where Bishop Nikolai is preaching. Then we will see the genius of the people. He stirs them and they betray what they are. I dare say that those who know them would laugh at me and tell me that the inhabitants are as mean and stupid as people are everywhere, but the truth is that when they are together in a church they show a power to accept life as it is and to glory in it which I have never seen equalled. I hope we start soon to find him." For I knew, indeed we had timed our journey by reason of our knowledge, that the Bishop Nikolai, who was Bishop of Zhitcha and of Ochrid, was now visiting his second diocese for a week.

But we did not start. Now that Constantine was with Gerda he had lost his innate personality, even down to the simplest and most instinctive ways of dealing with practical matters. She interrupted his exuberant stories, she pruned every expression of what was probably himself, and he submitted; and presently he timidly offered her something he hoped she would find more acceptable, which was an impersonation of what a German would conceive that a Jew who was a Slav by adoption and a poet would be. He was by nature a shouter and a snatcher, who would smash peace into a thousand fragments and then laugh at what he had shouted and give back what he had snatched, but as I had first known him he carried himself precisely enough from point to point of his life. He could rise early if need be, he was punctual, he never lost anything. Now he ran about like a Jewish comedian, yelling questions and not waiting for the answer, losing things, being too late, being too early. He had also developed an embarrassing habit of telling endless stories of himself in the character of a buffoon, a fool who had torn up valuable share certificates in a rage at the dishonesty of the company's directors, who had lost the chance of a valuable appointment through making some tactless remark. This pleased Gerda, and so it pleased him.

It was their kind of happiness, and we would ordinarily have had no objection to it; it was something that Molière might have invented. But it made our morning's search for Bishop

Nikolai into a painful fugue, which was reminiscent of a nightmare or the hallucinations of a persecution mania, or sometimes even a miracle play in which our party was playing the roles of the less admirable abstractions. The old town of Ochrid on its hill is stuck as thickly with churches as a pomander with cloves, and there are several churches in the new town that lies flat on the lake shore. The Bishop was going from church to church celebrating services all the morning, and we followed, but we never arrived in time. Every time we were told which church the Bishop was visiting at that moment we were delayed by some buffoonery on the part of Constantine, an insistence on checking the information by making enquiries from some startled person who knew nothing relevant, a sudden desire to buy tooth-paste or a book on fortune-telling, and we got to the church only to meet a crowd walking away from it quickly and with glowing faces, not as if they were in a hurry to reach anywhere, but rather as if some excitement had sent the blood rushing through their veins. There was nothing for us to do except to return to a café in the central square and drink more coffee until the time came for the re-enactment of this scene, which as the morning went on became more and more certainly to our fatigued minds a proof of superior displeasure, of our own unworthiness. It was a great relief to my husband and me when, about lunch-time, it was learned that the Bishop had left the town for a monastery twenty miles distant, and would not be back until the next day.

We spent the rest of the day in the narrow streets of the old town, looking at its lovely seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century houses, which have all their own fine faces, their own complexions, and furtively enjoying the quality of the people. In every part of the world one condition of human life dominates the stage. In the United States the stranger has to get his eye in before he can see anybody but beautiful young girls, in England handsome middle-aged men are the most visible ingredients of society; and here in Ochrid the conspicuous personages are slender old ladies with shapely heads, feline spines that are straight without being rigid, fine hands and feet, and a composure that sharply rather than placidly repulses recognition of all in life that is not noble. A more aristocratic type can hardly be conceived, although there was no suggestion of abstinence from anything but the roughest form of labour. It

was not that these old duchesses could not sew and cook and sweep, it was that Ochrid had a long past. Before it was Byzantine it was within the sphere of the lost Illyrian Empire, it had been a Greek city, and in its beginnings it had formed part of the settlement of a pre-Mycenaean civilisation. That is to say that for thousands of years there have been gentlefolks here, people who preferred harmony to disharmony, and were capable of sacrificing their immediate impulses to this preference. The tenuous thread of civilisation that here and there is woven into history never showed itself in prettier patterns than these distinguished old ladies, in whom not the smallest bone is barbarous.

But the most exciting aspect of Ochrid relates to its more recent past, to events divided from us by a mere eleven hundred years. As the Slav tribes fell under the influence of Byzantium a considerable number of them were baptized but they were first converted to Christianity in mass by the Greek brothers, Cyril and Methodius, who translated part of the gospels into Slavonic languages about the year 870; and their mission was carried to Ochrid by their followers, Clement and Gorazd and Naum. That is what it says in the books. But what does that mean? How did these events look and sound and smell? That can be learned on the top of the hill at Ochrid, in the Church of Sveti Kliment, and the other churches up there which were built in that age. According to Serbo-Byzantine fashion they crouch low in the earth, outbuildings for housing something that should not be where people live, something that needs to be kept in the dark. Doubtless in those early days there were converts who went into the blackness of these churches hoping to find new gods like those they had worshipped in their heathen days, but bloodier. Such worship is commemorated in certain Balkan churches, which to this day are ill to enter, being manifestly bad ju-ju. But shadow is also a sensible prescription for good magic, and Christianity as a religion of darkness has its advantages over our Western conception of Christianity as a religion of light.

I remembered as I stood in the Church of Sveti Kliment what a cloak-and-suit manufacturer once said to me when he was showing me his factory on Long Island: "Yes, it's a beautiful factory, sure it's a beautiful factory, and I'm proud of it. But I wish I hadn't built it. When I get a rush order I

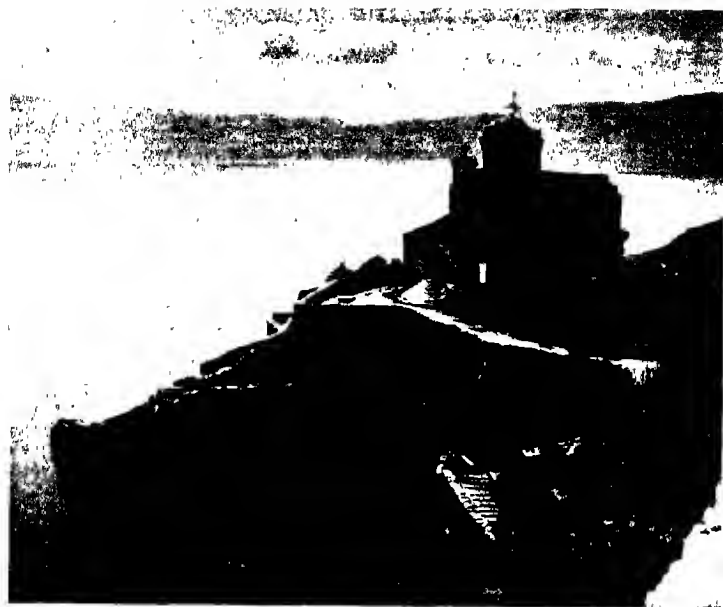


can't make my girls work in these big airy rooms the way they did in the little dark place we had down town. They used to get in a fever down there, their fingers used to fly. Up here you can't get them excited." Though the domes of Sveti Kliment are bubbles the porch is of extravagant clumsiness, approached by squat steps and pressed by a wide flat roof, which is utterly unecclesiastical and might be proper in a cow-byre, and is supported by thick and brutal columns. Within the porch is a wide ante-room which is used as a lumber-room, full of spare chairs, ornate candles for festival use, broken models of other churches. Almost every Orthodox church looks as if the removal men have been at work on it, and that they have been inefficient. Beyond is another darker antechamber, where those sat in the early days of the Church who were not yet baptized or who were penitents ; and beyond, darkest of all, is the church, a black pit where men could stand close-pressed and chanting, falling into trance, rising into ecstasy, as they stared at the door in the iconostasis, which sometimes opened and showed them the priests in dazzling robes, handling the holy things by the blaze of candlelight that is to the darkness what the adorable nature of God is to humanity.

It is a valid religious process ; and it is the one that these people to this day prefer. Further down the hill is the Church of Heavenly Wisdom, of Sveta Sophia, which was built, it is said, at the same time as the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople and was restored by the Nemanyas. It is a glorious building, the size, I should think, of Steeple Ashton parish church, a superb composition of humble, competent brickwork achieving majesty by its sound domes and arches. It is decorated with some magnificent frescoes of the Nemanya age, one showing an angry angel bending over Earth in rage against the polluted substance of those who are not angels, and another showing the death of the Virgin, where sorrowing figures drip like rain down the wall behind the horizontal body of a woman who is giving herself without reserve but with astonishment to the experience of pain, knowing it to be necessary. That the building should be now Christian is a victory, since the Turks used it as a mosque for five hundred years. But the church is full of light. It is built according to the Byzantine and not according to the Serbo-Byzantine fashion, and has no iconostasis but only a low barrier to divide the congregation from the



MARKET-PLACE AT OCHRID



THE CHURCH WHERE BISHOP NIKOLAI PREACHED BY LAKE OCHRID

priest. A makeshift iconostasis of chintz and paper and lath has been run up, but it is of no avail. Light stands like a priest over all other priests under the vaults that were raised high to cast out shadow. And this church is unbeloved. A fierce old nun keeps it fanatically clean and would give her life to defend it. But it is not the object of any general devotion. All the other churches in Ochrid have their devotees who can worship happily nowhere else and who speak of them with a passion which has something animal in it, something that one can imagine a beast feeling for its accustomed lair. But though Sveta Sophia was originally the Cathedral, the honour has been taken from it and given to the small dark Sveti Kliment; and nobody gives money or labour to mend the roof which is a sieve.

We left this rejected loveliness, and walked on through the town by a track which followed the top of a cliff beside the lake and took us at last to a church standing on a promontory covered with pale-yellow flowers. This I remembered well, for it was the Church of Sveti Yovan, of St. John, where I had learned for the first time the peculiar quality of Eastern Christianity, that is dark and not light, and unkempt as only the lost are in the West. When I had been here with Constantine the year before he had heard that this church was having its annual feast, and that Bishop Nikolai was holding the service. So we took a rowing-boat from the hotel and travelled over the milk-white water, while the morning sun discovered green terraces high on the black Albanian mountains and touched the snow peaks till they shone a glistening buff, and on the nearest coast picked out the painted houses of Ochrid till the town was bright as a posy of pale flowers. As we came nearer to the promontory we heard a sound of voices, not as if they were speaking anything, but just speaking, as bees hum; and I saw that all the ground about the church, and all the tracks that led to it, were covered with people. They were right out on the edge of the promontory, where the rock fell in a sharp overhang, and it seemed as if at any moment some of them must fall into the water. There were also many people in boats who were rowing round and round the promontory, never going very far from it, who were singing ecstatically.

Our boat drew ashore. We climbed a flight of steps that ran upward through the yellow flowers, under bending fig trees;

and on the cliff I found myself in the midst of a Derby Day crowd. They were talking and laughing and quarrelling and feeding babies, and among them ran boys with trays of rolls and cakes and fritters, and men selling sweet drinks. They sat or stood or lay in the grass as they would, and they were all dressed in their best clothes, though not all of them were clean. Some were pressing into the church, struggling and jostling in the porch, and others were pushing and being pushed through animal reek in the cave of darkness maintained by the low walls and doors in spite of the sunlight outside. There swaying together, sweating together, with their elbows in each other's bellies and their breaths on each other's napes, were people who had been lifted into a special state by their adoration of the brightness which shone extravagantly behind the iconostasis. After I had overcome the first difficulty of adapting myself to a kind of behaviour to which I was not accustomed, I found I liked the spectacle extremely.

The congregation had realised what people in the West usually do not know : that the state of mind suitable for conducting the practical affairs of daily life is not suitable for discovering the ultimate meaning of life. They were allowing themselves to become drunken with exaltation in order that they should receive more knowledge than they could learn by reason ; and the Church which was dispensing this supernatural knowledge was not falling into the damnable heresy of pretending that this knowledge is final, that all is now known. The service was clear from the superficial ethical prescription, inspired by a superstitious regard for prosperity, which makes Western religion so often a set of by-laws tinged emotionally with smugness. Had the Eastern Church in the Balkans wished to commit this error it has been prevented by history. For centuries it would have found it difficult to find a body of the fortunate sufficiently large to say with authority, " Be like us, be clean in person and abstinent from sin, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven ". There were too few fortunate Christians, save among the Phanariots, who had sold at least the better part of their souls ; and the unfortunate were too poor to be clean, and were chaste perforce, since their women had to be enclosed in patriarchal houses against the rape of enemies, and could not wholly abstain from murder, since only by blood could they defend themselves against the infidel. The Church had there-

fore to concentrate on the Mass, on reiterations of the first meaning of Christianity. It had to repeat over and over again that goodness is adorable and that there is an evil part in man which hates it, that there was once a poor man born of a poor woman who was perfectly good and was therefore murdered by evil men, and in his defeat was victorious, since it is far better to be crucified than to crucify, while his murderers were conquered beyond the imagination of conquerors; and that this did not happen once and far away, but is repeated every day in all hearts.

So the crowd in the church waited and rejoiced, while the deep voices of the singing priests and the candles behind the iconostasis evoked for them the goodness they had murdered, and comforted them by showing that it had not perished for ever. The superb performance of the Mass, a masterpiece which has been more thoroughly rehearsed than any other work of art, rose to its climax and ceased in its own efficacy. Goodness was so completely evoked that it could no longer be confined, and must break forth to pervade the universe; and with it there poured into the open the priests and the congregation. They blinked their eyes, having become accustomed to the shadows and the candlelight. The sunshine must have seemed to them an incendiarism of the air, committed by the radiance that had rushed out from the iconostasis. Bishop Nikolai, a huge man made more huge by his veiled mitre, stood blindly in the strong light, gripping his great pastoral staff as a warrior might grip a weapon when it was difficult for him to see. The people surged forward to kiss his ring, having forgotten in the intoxication of the darkness what they might have remembered if they had stayed sober in broad day, that he was clean and they were dirty, that he was lettered and they could not read. They cried aloud in their gratitude to this magician who had brewed the holy mystery for them behind the screen and had made the saving principle visible and real as brightness. The people rowing on the lake, hearing the cries of those on the cliff, leaned on their oars, and gave themselves up to their singing. The flat brilliant waters trembled, and the snow peaks glittered. It was as if joy had permeated the whole earth.

*Ochrid II*

We sat for a time by the Church of Sveti Yovan. There were no yellow flowers any more, but a great deal of small purple stock. Presently the lake became a savage green and it grew cold, and we climbed a hill to the fortress, which is no more than a wall encircling the summit, girt with olive orchards and country houses built in the Turkish style, now wistful in decay. We let Constantine and Gerda go on ahead and trespassed among the fruit trees of the loveliest of all these houses, which, with its pale plaster, its grey and crumbling woodwork, was like a ghost, not nearly as substantial as the blossom round it. But a violent storm opened above us like a flower, and we hurried down towards the hotel. We had not got far, however, when Constantine and Gerda called to us from a garden. They were sitting at a table under an acacia tree with a dozen people, and they said, "Come in, it is the birthday of the man who lives here, and they want us all to drink a glass of wine."

There came forward to welcome us a young man who looked like a great many Londoners, who might have been the office wag in a small City business, and his wife, who was lovely but too thin and too pallid. There is a great deal of anaemia among Yugoslavian women. We sat down at a table, and they gave us a great deal of wine, very quickly, and even more food. There was a tart filled with spinach, exquisite yoghourt, and a wonderful sweet made of flour drawn fine as cocoanut and flavoured with orange and chopped nuts. The husband explained that he had made all these himself, since he was a pastrycook, and deserved no credit, for his family had been pastrycooks since time out of mind, "as many of our people are," he said, "for we are Bulgarians." He said that he had three brothers away working abroad. "Where are they?" asked Constantine. There was a pause. We had been in the town over twelve hours, and of course everybody knew that he was a Government official. "One in Australia and two in Bulgaria," said the pastrycook. These were evidently not only Bulgarians, but Bulgarian adherents, who kept up the connection with the country of their allegiance.

Just then it came on to rain, and the feast had to be moved into the house. There was a fat man, a chauffeur, who turned

this into an entertainment by carrying in the dishes in the manner of various local dignitaries. In the house we found the owner's mother, who was one of the slender handsome old ladies for which Ochrid is so remarkable. We found that the refinement of her type was not a mere matter of appearance: she had fine manners, she knew certain things well, and she could express herself with perfect precision. The room where we sat was curiously like a Turkish room, with a wooden bench covered with cushions running along each side of the room, some rugs hung on the walls and no other furniture. This was surprising, as the whole family was so definitely not of Oriental type, and the young people, who were all wearing Western clothes, could have been taken for English or French. The pastrycook's wife started showing us the embroideries she had done for the house, which were infinitely distressing; she had inherited the national dexterity of the Macedonian woman, but she had employed it on the most frightful designs that could ever be found in an art needlework shop in Brighton. It is an odd thing that when these women drop the Byzantine tradition of design, even though they have been themselves inventing interesting variations of it, they show no discrimination and will copy with delight the crudest naturalist representations of fruit and flowers in vile colours on drab backgrounds; yet it cannot be said that they are without taste, for they often make themselves the most beautiful dresses in the Western style. Just then Dragutin turned up with the car, for he had already learned in a café in the centre of the town where we were, and thought it was a long way for us to walk home in the rain. But the pastrycook would not let us leave yet, so my husband drove back to the hotel, to fetch a box of sweets we had brought on the chance of such an occasion as this.

When my husband had gone the old mother showed me a photograph of her son who was in Australia, and the girl he had just married, who was a luscious Jewess. The fat chauffeur seized the photograph and held it out at arm's length, rocking himself from side to side and making smacking noises. Another picture showed the young couple surrounded by their friends at their wedding reception. "The dear girl," said the old mother, "he is going to bring her back here in a few years' time." The mind started back at the thought of the tragedy this statement might foretell. The girl and her friends looked pleasant



people but plainly they were dominated by manufactured goods ; they would set an immense value on their automobiles, their radios, their refrigerators and the cinema, and it might be that they could not exist apart from command over machines. It was odd that the degree to which the girl would be able to understand this distinctively Christian home would depend on the degree to which she had remained distinctively Jewish. If she had maintained that link with tradition she might realise the nature of this home, with its hearthstone founded on the past.

The mother brought out yet another photograph, this one showing the son standing with the rest of the staff in the restaurant where he worked, and they asked Constantine to translate the inscription that was painted on the wall. They were evidently puzzled when he had spoken, and made some speculations about the ascetic and exalted character of Australians, which seemed to me unfounded ; and I found that Constantine had rendered " Cleanliness is our Motto " as " Purity is our Creed ". Then the mother said that her son wanted her to go to Australia, but she would not go. She said she had heard that in these big towns people had no neighbours, that actually people might live on one storey of a building and not know the people on the others. That was dreadful, you couldn't even say it was like the animals, it was quite a new sort of wickedness. But she had done something about it : she had written to the son in Australia and the sons in Sofia and told them that she would come to see them if they sent the money, and they sent it, and she put it in the bank. Otherwise they would have spent it, and they'd be glad of it some day, for the absurd wages that young people got nowadays couldn't go on for ever. *Pour vu que cela dure*, Letizia Bonaparte used to say.

By this time I was becoming anxious because my husband had not returned, for the hotel was only five minutes away, and it was possible that Dragutin had for once been too clever about racing up and down these cobbled alleys. They noticed my distress, and one of the men went out to see if he could find the automobile. The old lady went to the window and said, " Look, there are some gipsies going up to the fortress. That's funny. I don't know why they would go up there this afternoon. They were all up there yesterday ; they go up there every year on that date, because a gipsy was once buried inside the fortress that day. And the odd thing is the poor silly things don't know who

it was. I've asked them again and again, and they just say, 'Oh, he was one of us, and a great chief, but we don't remember his name, for it was all a long time ago.' " I thought she was giving this information in a forced manner, and I saw that it was to distract the attention of Gerda and myself from what was going on at the other end of the room. There Constantine was standing with the husband and his friends opposite a frame containing several photographs which was hanging on the wall, oddly high. The young men were whispering into his ear and shielding their mouths with their hands, and he had assumed the expression of an indulgent man of the world. Soon afterwards the wife came in with a fresh bottle of wine, and I used the social movements this caused as an excuse to edge up to the frame. It contained several photographs marked Lille and Anvers and Bruxelles, all but one representing a young man of the year nineteen hundred, with a bowler hat and a short tightly waisted coat and a thick tie and waggish trousers, a rude but spirited imitation of the Boni de Castellane "Oh, what a cad I am" pattern. The exception which was marked Lille, showed a woman with a Roman nose and a bust of like minatory curve, and a chignon like a brick. Constantine said to me, "The man was the old lady's brother, who went to be a pastrycook in Belgium and France; the woman was his mistress. It is the great shame and glory of this family that they had an uncle who had a French mistress, and the old lady sometimes says she will take her photograph out of the frame and burn it. But that is how the frame was sent to them, and he is dead, and the mistress is dead also, and so she does not like to make away with it, and indeed they all feel that there is something strange and gay about it."

A little while afterwards I went to the window and looked out in vain, and said, "I wish I knew what had happened to my husband!" At that the young wife exclaimed, "Now this is very curious! Haven't you always heard that English wives were very cold to their husbands? But just see, she's anxious, she's really very anxious about him." "Well," said the old mother, "he looks a very good man, I'm sure he'll be a kind husband, and don't tell me there's any part of the world where women don't like kind husbands." Then the friend who had gone out to look for my husband came running in, clapping his hands and crying joyfully, "He is safe, thanks to God he

is safe, but there has been an accident!" The company responded to this announcement with a handsome interest, and listened with cries to his account of how the car had fallen into a ditch and had had to be dragged out by oxen. When my husband came in with the sweets he was greeted as one returned from death, and another bottle of wine was opened. When the exclamations died down the fat chauffeur looked at us over his glass, sighed sentimentally, and said, "Yes, they're fond of each other all right, look how close they are sitting and they aren't young either."

### *Ochrid III*

The next morning we woke late and breakfasted under the ash trees by the lake, in the best day this spring had yet given us. The lake was blue and feathered by a light wind, and the red fallow fields and the green pastures were mirrored so indistinctly that they formed a changing abstract pattern, lovely to watch. The mountains on the far shore were a hazy silver, but near at hand all was sharp-cut. Across the bay every house in old Ochrid showed its individual distinction, which was often of the slightest nature, lying in the curve in a pediment, the thrust of a bracket that held up a projecting upper storey, but was always as important, in its architectural sphere, as the length of Cleopatra's nose. Time went on, and the hour approached when we should go to the service conducted by Bishop Nikolai. We had made the extremest efforts to inform ourselves exactly when and where this was to take place. We had even taken the precaution, on leaving the pastrycook's agreeable party, to go to the church, which was small but filled with the idea of magnificence, and was strangely set in a pretty cottagey garden full of lilacs and irises, on a road running down from the fortress, and there Dragutin had sought among the neighbouring houses for the sacristan, from whom he had learned beyond all possibility of doubt that the Mass was to be celebrated the next day at half-past nine. But at twenty-five-past nine Constantine and Gerda were not ready, and when we knocked on his door he said that it was all right, the service did not begin till ten. We corrected the impression and went downstairs again and sat in the automobile.

At a quarter to ten Dragutin left the wheel and ran into the hotel, adopting the methods of one trying to make geese leave an outhouse, waving his arms and shouting, "*Aide ! aide !*" (This means, "Come on" or "Go out", and indeed any movement which is sought to be imposed by one person on another.) Five minutes later he hustled out Constantine and Gerda, and at ten we were where we had often been before, driving against a tide of glowing worshippers, hurrying away from their refreshment. But the urgency had gone from these people, they were standing about and gossiping. I burst into tears and said to my husband, "You will never see Bishop Nikolai, and it is ridiculous, because there is no reason why you should not, and you ought to see him, because he is what these people like." "But you shall see him," said Dragutin. He jumped out and spoke to a passing priest, jumped back and swung round the automobile till it headed for the alleys of the old town again, and brought us to a spot which in that town of delicate desolation was singularly bald in its decay. We got out and stood on a ledge; below us a long untended garden ran down to some houses that were mere lath and plaster, and above us, beside a house which had lost its whole façade and had grimly replaced it with a sheet of rusted iron, was the mouth of an alley that rose to a plot of waste ground. A few steps up this alley was a doorway, and Dragutin said, "Go in there and you will find the Bishop, the church is having its feast." I went in and found an unkempt garden before a small and battered church, full of people who were all looking at the loggia in front of it. There was Bishop Nikolai at the head of a table laid for a meal, where some priests and a nun, a man in uniform, and several men and women in ordinary clothes, were sitting, all with their faces turned towards him. I was surprised that the feast of a church should be a real feast, where there was eating and drinking.

Bishop Nikolai stood up and welcomed us, and I knew that he was not at all glad to see us. I was aware that he did not like Constantine and that he was not sure of me, that he thought I might turn and rend any situation at which he permitted me to be present by some Western treachery. I did not greatly care what he thought of me, for I was too greatly interested in him, and any personal relations between us could not aid my interest, for I could get everything out of him that I could ever get by

watching him. He struck me now, as when I had seen him for the first time in the previous year, as the most remarkable human being I have ever met, not because he was wise or good, for I have still no idea to what degree he is either, but because he was the supreme magician. He had command over the means of making magic, in his great personal beauty, which was of the lion's kind, and in the thundering murmur of his voice, which by its double quality, grand and yet guttural, suggests that he could speak to gods and men and beasts. He had full knowledge of what comfort men seek in magic, and how they long to learn that defeat is not defeat and that love is serviceable. He had a warm knowledge of how magic can prove this up to the hilt. He had a cold knowledge, which he would not share with any living thing, of the limited avail of magic, and how its victories cannot be won on the material battlefield where man longs to see them. He was so apt for magic that had it not existed he could have invented it. He saw all earth as its expression. When he greeted our undesired party, when he turned to command order in the mob of peasants and children and beggars that filled the garden and looked over the walls from outside, there was a blindish and blocked look in his eyes, as if he asked himself, "Of what incantation is this the end? What is the rite we are now performing? Is this white magic or black?"

He bade us take seats at the table, and I looked round and saw some people whom I had met at Ochrid on the first visit. There was the Abbot of the Monastery of Sveti Naum, which lies at the other end of the lake: an old man with a face infinitely fastidious, yet wholly without peevishness, a Macedonian who was a priest under the Turks and lived all his youth and manhood under the threat of sudden death and yet remained uninfected by the idea of violence; and there was a red-haired priest who sings marvellously, like a bull with a golden roar, and laughs like a bull with a golden nature, and who is much in request in Ochrid for christenings and weddings. Others were new: among them a schoolmistress who had been a Serbian pioneer here long before the Balkan wars, a jolly old soui; an immense officer of the gendarmerie, a Montenegrin, like all Montenegrins sealed in the perfection of his virility, as doubtless the Homeric heroes were; a functionary who was in charge of the Works Department of Ochrid, a dark and active

man, one of those enigmatic beings who fill such posts, facing the modern world with a peasant strength and a peasant reticence, so that the stranger cannot grasp the way of it.

We all began to eat. The crowd in the garden bought rolls from pedlars, and ice-cream cones from a barrow that was standing under the church steps. We at the table had cold lamb, hard-boiled eggs, sheep's cheese, cold fried fish, unleavened bread and young garlic, which is like a richer and larger spring onion. The Bishop said to my husband, with hatred of Western Europe's hatred of the Balkans in his voice, "This is something you English do not eat, but we are an Eastern people, and all Eastern peoples must have it." He gave me a hard-boiled egg and took one himself, and made me strike his at the same time that he struck mine. "The one that cracks the other's egg shall be the master," he said. It was to amuse the people and to give himself a moment's liberty not to think, for he was heavy with fatigue. Ever since Easter he had been going from church to church, carrying on the sorcery of these long services, and offering himself as a target for the trust of the people. He had to go on to some other church, and soon he let the crowd see that he must before long dismiss them.

They grieved at it, they gobbled up their rolls and ice-cream cones or threw them on the ground and crushed forward to the table. Bishop Nikolai stood up and cried, "Christ is risen!" and they answered, "Indeed He is risen!" Three times he spoke and they answered, and then they stretched out their hands and he gave them eggs from a great bowl in front of him. This was pure magic. They cried out as if it were talismans and not eggs that they asked for; the Bishop gave out the eggs with an air of generosity that was purely impersonal, as if he were the conduit for a force greater than himself. When there were no more eggs in the bowl the people wailed as if there were to be no more children born into the world, and when more eggs were found elsewhere on the table the exultation was as if there were to be no more death. There was a group of little boys standing by the Bishop, who wailed and cheered with the passion of their elders, but had to wait until the last, since they were children. To these Gerda now began to distribute eggs from a bowl that was near her.

This was the moment that we all fear when we are little, the moment when some breach of decorum would put an event

into a shape so disgusting that nobody who saw it could bear to go on living. Later we learn to disbelieve in this moment, so many of the prescriptions laid on our infant mind are nonsense, but we are wrong. The word shocking has a meaning. There are things that shock, other than crimes. We did not feel any special shame at Gerda's action because we had come to the feast with her, we had not got to that yet, it was to come later. For the moment we simply participated in the staring horror that was shown by everybody at the table. The children to whom she held out the eggs took them awkwardly, not knowing what else to do, and then withdrew their attention from her, like animals turning from one of their kind who is sick. Bishop Nikolai, turning towards her and dropping his eyes as if he were looking at her through his lids, was like Prospero, letting by in silence one of his creature's faults. But Gerda felt in the bowl for another egg and was about to hold it out to the children, when my husband said to her, "You cannot do that." She hesitated, then drew back the corners of her mouth in an insincere imitation of a motherly smile, and said, quite untruly, "But some of the children were crying." Her hand went back to the bowl, and it was not certain what she would do, or what Bishop Nikolai would do, when a distraction came to save us.

Through the doorway from the alley a beggar came into the garden. He was old and in rags and very filthy, and it could be judged he was blind, for he was tapping his way with a staff, and his eyes gleamed like dead fish. He stopped and asked that he should be led to the Bishop, and half a dozen people busied themselves in bringing him up to the table. Once there he said some words of greeting to the Bishop, threw back his sightless head and shuddered, laid his foul hands on my husband's shoulders to steady himself, then stood upright and burst into song. "I do not know who this man is," said the red-haired priest in my ear, "he is not of Ochrid. And this hymn he is singing is very old." That it might well have been, for it proceeded from the classic age of faith, before the corruption of masochism had crept in, before the idea of the atonement had turned worship into barter. It adored; it did not try to earn salvation by adoring; it adored what it had destroyed, and felt anguish at the destruction, and rejoiced because death had been cheated and the destroyed one lived. Again the sunshine seemed part of a liberated radiance.

He ceased, crossed himself with a gesture not of self-congratulation but of abandonment, and the Bishop called him to the table, gave him his blessing, and filled his hands with bread and lamb and garlic and eggs. He went away and sat on the grass under a fig tree and ate his meal, licking the meat off the bones very happily, and we all talked easily at the table. "There used to be many beggars like this in the old days," they told us. "It was believed that when a man became blind it must be because God wished him not to see but to think, and that it was his duty to leave his home and go where the spirit called, living on what people gave him. But now there is doubt everywhere and nobody thinks of such things." The occasion was entirely restored. At length Bishop Nikolai made a speech proposing the civil servant as president of the church council for the coming year, a speech full of gentle little jokes, and led the children's cheers for him. Then he made a civil reference to my husband and myself, expressing pleasure that people should come all the way from England to Ochrid; and I found the pale old Abbot of Sveti Naum standing by me, like a courteous ghost, holding out an egg in his thin hand. "He says," translated the Bishop whose English is beautiful, as befits one who once preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, "that he is giving you this to take to your parish priest, as a symbol that the Anglican Church and the Orthodox Church are united in the risen Christ, not the buried Christ, but the Christ who lives for ever. Have you got a parish priest?" he enquired very doubtfully. I said, truthfully, but perhaps evasively, "I will take it to my cousin, who is priest of a church that was built when the Anglican Church and the Orthodox Church were one," and I tied up the egg in my handkerchief. Bishop Nikolai watched my fingers absently, his hands tightening on the edge of the table, ready to take his weight when he rose.

Then the moment which had been averted returned. Constantine got on his feet and began to make a speech. I do not know what he said, but the Bishop was Prospero again, this time a wearied and infuriated Prospero who had at last lost patience with his creatures. He raised his great head and emitted a look the like of which I had not seen, as of a god ordering that the sun should eclipse the moon and thereafter do its work. But Constantine was not affected, because he was engaged in an enterprise that was itself not without



grandeur. For Gerda's monstrous action had denied the validity of magic, and had asserted that an egg given by a human hand must be the same as an egg given by any other human hand ; and there had come to annul her action an action, as extraordinary, and indeed more extraordinary, since an ecstasy of well-being is more difficult to come by than a convulsion of pain, and the blind beggar had made his declaration that magic keeps all its promises. So Gerda had been forgotten, and indeed forgiven. But out of loyalty to the strange land where they had lived together, in isolation from the common custom, Constantine was committing again what she had committed, in order that it should stand in spite of the exquisite correction it had received ; and he performed this action in the way that would give her pleasure, on a lower plane than hers. When she had given away the eggs it had been with a certain dignity, as if she were the competent mother of a family ; but he was now the Jewish comedian. He stood up in clothes crumpled with travel before these people, who were not used to short and stout Jews that jump about and are voluble, who know only the tall and hawk-like Jews that move quietly and are silent, and before their wondering gaze he waved his little arms and spoke so fast and loud that a speck of foam showed on his lower lip. The Bishop could not support the spectacle. He surged out of his chair and, looming above the small Constantine, bade the children give three cheers for him. But when they had finished Constantine went on speaking. The Bishop filled his glass, pouring the wine so wildly that the cloth round it was purpled, and stretched out his huge arm over the table, in front of Constantine's flushed and shining face, and drank a toast to the company. Even then Constantine still went on speaking, so utterly fixed was he in his double intention, which every moment disclosed a more dreadful beauty, to uphold Gerda in her attack on the world, and to uphold her in her contempt for him. The Bishop beat down his glass on the table, said his farewells with a stateliness that was the calm at the heart of a storm, thrust back his chair so that it fell into the hands of the children behind him, and strode out of the garden, the crowd shuffling after him. Soon there was nothing to be seen but the trodden grass. We were left standing at the table, the other guests looking at us curiously.

*Ochrid IV*

Gerda and Constantine looked quietly happy. "I did not make too much of my speech," said Constantine, "but this is Bishop Nikolai's stamping ground, he must be allowed to do all the shining here. I was thinking that now your husband has seen the Bishop it would be a good thing if we went to the little monastery where we went with the poet last year. It has a very pretty view and it would be a good end to such a nice morning." I thought it was an excellent idea, for we certainly had to go somewhere, we could not stay where we were, and I remembered the monastery as a pleasant place in the hills behind Ochrid. We had gone there with a young poet of the town to find a place where he could read Constantine his verses without all his friends looking on, but it had not proved very suitable for this. A little dog in the cloisters belonging to a nun had howled incessantly because his mistress had gone into the town to do some shopping: and the priest, a sturdy old man of seventy with ten children, of whom either six or seven, he said, were sons, was distressed by the proceedings. He kept on muttering, "Verses, tut, tut! It's all right to make up a song in one's head, but to write it down, you can't tell me that's not a waste of time." The old man was relieved when the poetry-reading was finished and he could take us down to the village and introduce us to his mother, who was sitting on the edge of a fountain with several companions of her own age.

Macedonia makes one doubt many things that one has previously believed, and in nothing is it more unsettling than in its numbers of immensely aged people. They must be old, though probably not as old as they say, but still very old, because one finds them living in the same house with five generations of their descendants. Yet Macedonians have shocking teeth. It is possible that dentists are such deceptions as Solomon said that strange women were, that our Puritanism has persuaded us to go to the dentists because the drill hurts, and that what we need to-day is more dental caries.

But when we got to the monastery the priest and his family had gone, and there was a new priest, a man in his late twenties from Debar, sensitive and a little sad, obviously not robust, and wearing spectacles with very strong lenses. He took us

into the church and showed us the frescoes which were very bad modern peasant stuff ; there was a Last Judgment which represented the saved as fitted with hard little haloes like boiled eggs, the apotheosis of the good egg. We looked at Ochrid, lying beyond the green and crimson plains against the white silk of the lake, and then we would have gone away had it not been that the priest was so gently eager for us to stay. We did not want to eat for we had already had both breakfast and the church meal, which had comprised really a great deal of wine and lamb and fish and eggs and garlic, and it was not yet noon ; but he hurried away with a shining face and got us some wine and sheep's cheese and eggs, and took us up to his room to eat them. The room was bitterly poor. The mattress of his bed was laid not on a bedstead but on timber trestles, the towels were poor wisps of cotton, and there were no rugs on the floor and no books. He sat and smiled at us and asked questions about life outside Macedonia, of which he seemed to know very little. He spoke with something that was not quite curiosity, that was more tactile ; the effect was as if a very gentle blind person were running his finger-tips over one's features.

Suddenly his face fell and we heard the clattering of feet coming up the wooden staircase, very fast. He put down his wineglass and drew his hand across his forehead. The door was thrown open and a nun hurried in, a woman of about fifty-five or sixty. She said, "Thank God you're still here," and sat down on the priest's bed and asked who we all were, panting for breath and fanning herself. "Well, well," she said, the second Constantine had finished introducing us, "you're all very interesting people, but I've had an interesting life, you can't say I haven't, you wait till you hear it." The priest uttered a low sound expressive of agony and fatigue. "I am a Serbian," she began after she had taken a full breath, "I come of a very rich family of the Shumadiya, and I was married very young, naturally enough, for I was very beautiful and everybody in the world wanted to marry me. I was early left the childless widow of the eldest of four rich brothers, and all of them loved me very much, all my family and my husband's brothers, I was their darling and I had everything a woman could want. So I was proud and I was beautiful, I was very beautiful." I said to my husband, "But this woman has never been beautiful." My husband said in choked tones as if he were making a grave

accusation, "She is like a milkman's horse."

"And," said the nun, "I was very coquettish. See, I had one flaw in my beauty"—she tilted up her tall nun's hat to show us what it was—"I had a very high forehead. People used to say to me, 'You have the brow of a professor,' and I used to weep all night because I had this one fault, and then I took to covering it with curls, with little, little, fine curls which took hours to make. And I sang, and I danced, and I was cruel with those who loved me, and so the time passed. But once I dreamed—I dreamed a most wonderful dream." She caught her breath and stared in front of her. The priest made a gesture which made me recall those lines in which Coleridge fixed for ever the feelings of those who listen to a long tale when they want to do something else :

The Wedding Guest here beat his breast,  
For he heard the loud bassoon.

But she continued, we were as fresh blood in the vampire's mouth.

In her dream, she told us, the Mother of God had appeared before her, holding a most beautiful child, which she had put into her arms. She had felt the weight and warmth of the child as she held it and experienced a most wonderful glow of joy ; and when she woke up she could not believe that it had not really happened. She was worried by this dream, and had told everybody about it, but nobody could tell her what it meant, though once her mother had said to her, "I believe that dream means that you will have this child, but it will not be yours, it will be called by another name." Some years passed and she went to a Christian Belief meeting and heard a young theological student make a speech, and as he spoke she had to grip her seat to prevent herself from falling unconscious on the floor, for she recognised him as the child of her dreams grown into a man. At once she sought him out, and as he was an orphan she adopted him as her son. Soon she found a rich girl for him to marry, and then there was trouble. He would not marry this heiress, for he had fallen in love with a poor girl, who was not only poor, but tuberculous.

"I was very angry," said the nun, "but then a priest in a monastery said to me, 'Your son will marry the girl he loves, but it will last only three days,' so after that I did not work against his marriage, though I made him promise that he would

not sleep with her, for fear he should get tuberculosis." Then, three days after they were married, the girl had fallen dead in her husband's arms while they were standing together by a window. The nun's attitude to this happening was that of a fisherman who pulls in his line and finds a very large fish on the end of it. A short while afterwards, while she was in Albania, staying with a friend, she had heard that the bereaved boy had announced his intention of becoming a monk, so she and the friend had immediately started for Belgrade and tried to prevent him.

At this point in the story the nun stamped on the floor to show just how hard she had tried to prevent him ; and the poor young priest went and looked out of the window, pressing his forehead against the glass. But it had been no use, she continued, her adopted son said that he had promised his wife that if she died he would become a monk. So she had said that she would become a nun, and had done so. And her friend from Albania had been so impressed by the proceedings that she also had become a nun. "Not," said this nun, "that that was much sacrifice, for she was over sixty and not at all good-looking. But I, who was young and beautiful and had everything, I was now to live on nothing, on what people gave me, on what my dog might have had when I was rich. Now did you ever hear such a story in your life ? "

One rarely had, for it was purely nihilist. It disclosed no amiable characteristics on the part of the teller, it seemed to consist solely of a capacity for obsession : it disclosed no sense of anybody else's characteristics, the other persons were faceless puppets, though certainly as she went on one had a curious fancy that the theological student talked to his adopted mother downward from the branches of a tree. "Did your English friends ever hear such a story ? " gleefully demanded the nun, looking into our faces and slapping us on the back. "Now you must come and see my room." Over her bed hung an immensely enlarged photograph of herself when young, which showed that she had indeed never been beautiful, that my husband had been right, she had always had the long-faced vivacity of not the best sort of horse. She must have rushed through life stamping and shouting and adopting people who were not of her kind and adopting careers for which she had no vocation, and preventing life from forming a coherent pattern.

We went back to the priest's room for a little while but it was useless. She sat and talked, her bony hand twitching on her lap with a desire for activity which had no relation to those movements which actually produce any result, to the movements one makes in playing a musical instrument or writing; and the priest watched her in a silence he would not have broken even if she had let him. He would have to live with this woman in this small monastery, which was at least five miles from the town, till his ecclesiastical superiors removed him.

When we got into the automobile Constantine turned to us and beamed. "There is our true Slav mysticism," he said, "I am glad that you are not to leave Yugoslavia without seeing something of that side of our lives." "Yes," said Gerda, "she is like someone in Tolstoy."

### *Afternoon at Struga*

On returning to our hotel we found to our considerable distress that because we had pleased the staff in some way there was being prepared for us a specially fine fish risotto; this made our fourth meal during the last four hours. We ate in falsely smiling gratitude under the ash trees by the lake, and then sat in a state of distension, trying to dilute ourselves with coffee. There minced by a slim old woman with gallantly dyed brown hair puffed forward and pinned down into a kind of cap, and a high net collar held to her lean neck by whalebones, picking her steps and swinging her reticule in reference to some standard of gentility that was obsolete and ridiculous, though she was not to be ridiculed, so poignant was her grief, her gallantry. I said, "That might be a Russian general's widow in a story by Tchekov," and lo! it was a Russian general's widow, who played the piano in a café down the street.

This set us wrangling about the Russian writers. My husband and I said we liked Dostoievsky and Turgeniev the best. My husband said that *The Possessed* seemed to him to cover every possible eventuality in moral life, and a great many of the particular eventualities of historical life which we were likely to face, and that in Turgeniev he found something that reminded him of Greek literature but without enough of effort

or desire to make him feel that this was the world he knew. I said that I made my choice because all writers wanted to write the book that Dostoievsky had written in the Inquisitor's Dream in *The Brothers Karamazov*, and because all writers knew that all books should be written like *On the Eve*. But Constantine said, "No, you are wrong, Tolstoy was the greatest of them all." This I found hard to bear; for surely Tolstoy is the figure that condemns nineteenth-century Europe, which never would have been awed by him if it had not lost touch with its own tradition. Otherwise it would have recognised that everything Tolstoy ever said that was worth saying had been said far better by St. Augustine and various Fathers and heretics of the Early Church, who carried the argument far beyond the scope of his intellect. "But he was a great man, he was a great personality," said Constantine. "I remember reading that a Japanese had once come to see Tolstoy at Yasnaya Polyana, and, seeing him, had gone straight back to Japan, in order that nothing might diminish the intensity of his impression, though he had always longed to see Europe." "But what was his impression, and what happened to him afterwards?" I asked, really wanting to know. "What does that matter?" said Constantine. "It is a question of —" His hand reverently described a huge empty circle. There opened a vision of a world without content, where great men spoke and said nothing, where the followers listened and trembled and learned nothing, and existence was never transformed into life.

Dragutin strolled towards us along the edge of the lake, throwing in stones. He called out, "If we're going to spend the night at the Monastery of Sveti Naum we needn't start till five. Why don't we go and spend the afternoon at Struga, the famous Struga?" He began to sing the special song of Struga, which says that of all towns in the world it is the prettiest, which indeed is somewhere near the truth, as we had noted when we stopped there on our way from Skoplje. "Yes, let us do that," said my husband, and the others would not, so we went off alone.

It is an enchanting little place, white and clean like a peeled almond. It straddles the river Drin, which runs out of Lake Ochrid as much brighter than water as crystal is than glass, and its houses are white and periwinkle blue, and everywhere there are poplars and willows and acacias. It is only a country town, it does not bear the stamp of a great culture like Ochrid, but it

is pretty, pretty enough to eat, and the minutes pass like seconds if one stands on the bridge and looks at this extravagantly clear water running under the piers, visible just to a point sufficient to give pleasure to the eye.

We walked about the town for a time and came on the church, with many people standing about in the churchyard and a multitude of gipsies sitting on the walls. Bishop Nikolai, they said, was holding a service inside, and there were sounds of ecstatic singing. We were told that when he came out with the procession the gipsies would get up and go into the church and worship silently, and then go home. They would not dream of going into the church while the house-dwelling Christians were still about. This confirmed my feeling of dislike for the gipsies, it was such a Puccini thing to do. But we had to linger for a few moments, for though they were all wearing Western clothes they had chosen them with such a valiant appetite for colour, laying orange by royal blue, scarlet by emerald, dun by saffron-yellow, that they outshone the most elaborate peasant costume, though there was not a garment amongst them which could not have been bought in Oxford Street.

"Let us go and see the eels," clamoured Dragutin, "let us go and see the eels." So at last we went to see the fisheries, where they catch eels in a pen of hurdles sunk in the unbelievably clear river. The fishers drew two out of the crystal water, themselves black crystal, and bound them together, alongside but with the head of one to the tail of the other, so that they could wriggle in the long grass under our inspection without getting a chance of liberty. Dragutin cried out in pleasure at this device. He was always happy when there were animals about, just as people who have a great deal of the child in them are happy with children, and when he saw men exercising control over animals he used to cheer heartily but without malice, as a schoolboy might cheer if he saw a wrestler from his own house overcoming one from another house. "And look," he said, pointing over the water-meadow to some wooden bungalows standing under poplars in long grass among many little canals, "there's the biological station. They've got a museum there, where you can see all the birds and beasts to be found in the district; you can go in if you like."

We left him playing with the eels. He liked living things, he said. But he would have recognised a brother in the old



custodian who took us round the curious building, like a house-boat turned to scientific purposes, where stuffed animals, eagles and wolves, bears and wild cats, boars and snakes, stared glassily through a green dusk. He had precisely the same attitude towards animals. There was to him no greater division between himself and the beasts than there is between Serbs and Greeks, Bulgarians and Turks. When my husband said, "But this is an enormous wild boar," he explained that, in the no-man's-land between Yugoslavia and Albania, no hunting is allowed in the forests, and the wild boars take refuge there and grow fat on the acorns and chestnuts; and he grumbled, "Dort leben sie sehr gut," just as a Cockney might say of the Lord Mayor of London and his aldermen, "Turtle soup and port they 'ave, they don't live like us pore men."

He was glad that most of his charges were where they were, out of mischief, neatly stuffed, preserved for eternity by camphor balls in highly polished glass cases; but over one he mourned. This was a two-headed calf which was strangely lovely in form, it was like a design made for a bracket by the Adam brothers; its body had the modest sacrificial grace of all calves, and it was a shock to find that of the two heads which branched like candelabra one was lovely, but one was hideous, as that other seen in a distorting glass. "It was perfectly made," lamented the old man, "it was perfectly made." "Did it live after its birth?" asked my husband. "Did it live!" he exclaimed. "It lived for two days, and it should be alive to-day had it not been for its nature." "For its nature?" repeated my husband. "Yes, its nature. For the peasant who owned it brought it here to our great doctors as soon as it was born, and here it did well. I tell you, it was perfectly made. But for two days did the beautiful head open its mouth and drink the milk we gave it, and when it came to the throat, then did the ugly head hawk and spit it out. Not one drop got down to its poor stomach, and so it died." To have two heads, one that looks to the right and another that looks to the left, one that is carved by grace and another that is not, the one that wishes to live and the other that does not: this was an experience not wholly unknown to human beings. As we pressed our faces against the case, peering through the green dusk, our reflections were superimposed on the calf, and it would not have been surprising if it had moved nearer the glass to see us better.

*Sveti Naum*

Sveti Naum lies an hour's drive from Ochrid, at the opposite end of the lake. On clear days you may see it across the waters, shining white on a small Gibraltar of dark rock. The road runs to it along the lakeside, over mountains covered with sweet-scented scrub and golden broom, and down to a fishing village with its bronze nets drying on high poles by the shore. When we passed the young people were sitting about in the late afternoon glow, in particularly exotic peasant costumes which took the mind to Persia, with an air of being very pleasant with one another; and Dragutin said that the village was noted not only for its violent political life but for the tender consideration the men showed towards the women. "Some of the people have been to America," he explained, "and they come back like that." Then the mountains become fierce again, and as Biblical as the plains round Debar. A naked range as black as night, its high ridge starred with snow, lay to the left, and on the right, across the lapis-blue lake, the Albanian mountains were a darker blue veiled with white clouds, all in forms stern as justice. Then the road dropped to the mercy of the flatlands round Sveti Naum, and the traveller must be conscious thereafter that he has come to a place which is remarkable in a much simpler, more fundamental way than we are accustomed to note in the modern world.

The road to the monastery runs between steep meadows and becomes an avenue of tall poplars on the landward side and stout willows on the lakeward side, growing from smooth and springy turf. There is water on both sides of this avenue. The lake is always near at hand on the right, shining between the trees, and at the end of the avenue we crossed a bridge over a river which flows from a lake on the left, a small and more light-minded lake, prettily reflecting an island hung with willows. When one first comes to Sveti Naum one simply thinks, "Why, there is water everywhere." But the situation is more unusual than that, for in many parts of the world dry land is only a figure of speech. Here one finds oneself saying, "But the trees and the flowers and the grass in this place have never been thirsty, and the air has never been dusty", and there is an eupeptic air about the scene, as if the earth had here attained

a physiological balance in this matter of moisture rarely to be found elsewhere. And this is no illusion. Beyond the range of black rock on the left lies the Lake of Prespa, which covers about a hundred and twenty square miles, lies five hundred feet higher than Lake Ochrid, and has no visible outlet. Its waters percolate through the base of this range and arrive at these flatlands in a spread network that forms a perfect natural irrigation system, so that it emits refreshment to the eye, the nostril, the skin.

Crouching on the massive black rock, of which one face drops down to the great lake, the monastery is curiously deformed by a concrete tower livid in colour and vile in design. It was put up to commemorate the thousandth year of the foundation. It was Bishop Nikolai who let it be built thus, and he has been bitterly criticised for it. His defence is that the monks and the congregation wanted it to be so, and that it was no business of his to earn the approval of the museums. A pier runs out into the lake, and the road turns away and mounts a steep stone causeway, and under an arch enters the paddock that nearly always surrounds a monastery. This is larger than most, for it covers five or six acres of grassy hillside. Round it are some extremely beautiful farm buildings, probably some hundred years old, with wide tiled roofs propped up by wooden pillars, and loggias undercut by arches, which have about them a distant memory of Greek architecture. Swine, and some horses, an imperial and poppy-wattled turkey, and two peacocks crop the grass, and there are some tall and spreading trees. This paddock has its history. Under the Turks fairs were held here, and the Christian merchants and peasants from different parts of the country would meet, the worn threads of Byzantine culture held a little longer, and sometimes insurrection was plotted.

We passed under an arch and were in the small square formed by the monastery buildings. They are a mixed lot, put up at various times since the fourteenth century, which are painted different colours, some white, some grey, some red, for no other reason than that the monks happened to be given these paints. At one point there are no buildings, and a terrace looks down on the wide face of the lake. The air up here is cooled by the breath of the water. In the centre of this square is the tenth-century Church of Sveti Naum. It is dark and low, its stone walls are brown save where they are plastered white, and



THE PADDOCK OF SVETI NAUM



VIEW FROM SVETI NAUM WHERE THE DRIN RUNS INTO LAKE OCHRID

its two cupolas, one of which is taller than the other, are of red and white brick, very old, very dim in colour ; and it is roofed with red-brown tiles. In shape it is like a locomotive. It stands above the cobbles of the square on a platform of earth, walled up with stone. On one side of the church there grows a lilac tree, which bears very large purple flowers, on the other a fig tree. By the fig tree are some poles on which they dry the monastery fishing-nets.

There was nobody about when we arrived but one of the more mystical monks, an old man like a long white-pointed flame, to whom we were nothing, who was probably not sure whether we were among the living or the dead. So we went straight into the church, which is the supreme example of the Serbo-Byzantine architecture that burrows to find its God. It is small, it might be the lair of a few great beasts. There are a few narrow windows and most of them are slits in the cupolas. If it were not for the candles burning in front of the icons the dark outer church and the darker inner church would be hardly more distinguishable than the walls of dungeons. The gilded iconostasis here shines only with a dim coppery gleam. There is a curious smell here, strong yet clean ; the two squat columns which divide the churches are based on the living rocks. A low door leads from this darkness to a small darker place, where there is the tomb of Sveti Naum. A tin lamp with red and blue glass shows the great marble box, its top covered by a piece of striped white and gold cloth, poorish in quality, and greasy where too many of the faithful have rested their heads ; the Scriptures lie on it too, a pair of thick volumes in artless silver bindings, and a common wooden cross, and a collection-box sealed with pink wax ; propped against the wall are four icons, all veiled with machine-made lace and one festooned with cotton roses ; there are several bundles of clothes, gifts to the monastery which are laid up for a time and then sold ; and cast face down among this precious rubbish, in an attitude of despair, was a man in the cap and apron of a scullion.

On a fresco above the tomb was a portrait of Sveti Naum, almost certainly painted by someone who knew him. He was the successor to Sveti Kliment, the first Christian missionary to be sent by Cyril and Methodius into these parts, and he had to bring not peace but a sword, since none of the persons involved had yet heard of peace. He looks a warrior. Through-

out these thousand years nobody has ever dared to touch the stern eyes of his portrait, and this means much ; for it is near the ground, and it was the unpious habit of Turks to shoot out the eyes of Christian saints in frescoes, and the pious habit of peasants to scratch them out and soak the plaster to make a lotion for failing sight. His sternness, and the black strength of the church, have been claimed as a refuge by the Macedonian peasant from his ultimate terror ; and it illuminates the horror of history in these parts that this is not failure of courage but loss of sanity. Travellers who visited the country in the old days were astonished at the amount of madness, often directly traceable to some act of war such as the burning of a village, and sometimes to the severity of peasant life. This monastery is a hospital for the miraculous treatment of such cases. They are brought here and fed and housed and prayed over by this tomb for forty days. No doubt this scullion was one of the melancholics.

We left the monastery and went down the hill to the bridge over the river between the two lakes, for I wanted my husband to see the wonder of it. This river, the Drin, is clear like no other river, it is brighter than water as crystal is brighter than glass, it is visible only to the point that it can give pleasure to the eye. It is, in fact, the same river that we had seen at Struga. It has its source in certain springs that flow unmixed into the lesser, willow-hung lake, which is mere water like any other lake ; it declares its peculiar shining rapture as it runs under the bridge ; it dives into Lake Ochrid like a person, and like a person is not confused with that in which it swims ; and twenty miles away it leaves the lake still itself, to be clearly identified, absolutely unlike any other river. As the sun set behind the range of black rock the air became as remarkable as this water in its transparence, its cleanliness, its fluidity. We put our elbows on the parapet and looked out towards the lake, and found our knees were touching something sculptured. It was a slab carved with a ram and a ewe copulating, obviously the relic of some fertility cult. When the first Christian Slavs built their churches they often incorporated into the buildings such remnants of the pagan faiths that had been cultivated on the sites. This was remarkable for its prosaic quality : the ram looked like a rate-payer, the ewe had an air of routine modesty. A fertility cult, in the hands of dull people, must have been

duller than any modern form of religion. We heard from the palely glowing land the baaing of sheep, the sweet cracked beat of their bells, and, finally, the sound of a voice, darkened by a saintly shadow, of invitation calling a name again and again. In an orchard that itself looked spectral in the twilight by reason of the whitewash on the tree-trunks, there walked the delicate old Abbot, his red sash as strange as a bright colour worn by a phantom ; and presently his call was heard and there ran to him a peasant in a sheepskin coat. The Abbot pointed up to the branches of a tree, and the peasant registered surprise and distress. Then a handsome boy galloped by on a pony, saddled with wood and bridled with rope, and they cried out that he must stop. He rode to them among the fruit trees, and they pointed out to him whatever it was that had distressed them in the tree-top. He stared up, blurted out an answer that apparently proved their distress to be the result of a comical mistake, and they all broke into laughter. The pale glow over the land grew golden.

On our return to the monastery courtyard we found a monk whom I had met on my previous visit, sitting with two of the lunatics and singing them airs from *Madam Butterfly*. This monk is a Serb from Novi Sad, who is called the Doctor because he had been a medical student for two or three years before he took his vows. It is said that he took them because he himself was cured of a mental disorder by Sveti Naum. He is a charming person, with a face that is at once extremely animal, as if he could find his way by scent, and extremely mild, as if he were purged of aggressiveness and all the baser instincts, and he has a beautiful baritone voice, rich with detached sensuousness. It is delightful to be with him, though it is not easy to get in touch with him, for the Austro-Hungarian Empire did not, as is often falsely alleged, open the Western world to its peoples by teaching them German ; Novi Sad was in Hungary and its children were taught not German but Hungarian. He works very hard, for he sings at most of the services ; he alone receives all guests who visit the monastery, and he takes his share of looking after the lunatics, but he has a skin as smooth as a child's and the charm of an indolent man.

The lunatics bore testimony to his power in dealing with them by sinking back into their woe as soon as he turned his attention from them. They kept on staring at the church where



all their hopes were centred. This was the antithesis of the Byzantine practice of blinding people by making them look at a bright light ; they were trying to get back their inner sight by keeping their eyes on the darkness. Both of them were so mad that nobody could have seen them without noticing their condition. One, a young girl in a cheap cloth coat with a goat-skin collar, was perhaps a shop assistant from some small town ; she was wearing bedroom slippers, and a hole in her stocking showed her bare heel. The other was a superbly handsome man in his thirties, with the long hair and a beard of a priest, who was dressed like his companion in Western clothes, but with an extreme carelessness ; his socks were bright yellow, and he wore curious strap-shoes like a child's. They were very different. Of the girl one could say quite simply, " She would not be mad if someone had not been so cruel to her ", as simply as one might say, " That face would not be bruised if someone had not struck it ". But in the man there worked an elemental distress, peculiar to himself, which might have vexed him had he never known any but himself, or only the loving. He was in the predicament of the two-headed calf, part of his soul was spitting out nourishment it needed.

There was something shocking to a Western mind in the disorder of their dress. But when I looked back to the time of my life when I was most miserable I realised that it would have been a great relief to have let everything about me, including my clothes, express that misery ; and it indicated no callousness on the part of their guardians, for some of the monks are so rapt in ecstasy that they notice nothing material, and the others had been brought up in Turkish Macedonia, where a ragged garment was more normal than a whole one in many Christian homes. It was not at all terrible to be with these people, and indeed their condition seemed far from being the worst that can be feared, when we were joined by a young man who was staying in the monastery, not as a lunatic but as a tourist. Small and whippy, wearing curious knickerbockers of Central European pattern, he sat whistling and trimming his nails with a penknife, and was none the more acceptable for having his wits about him. He seemed to find the time pass slowly, as indeed it must in an Orthodox monastery if one is not interested in Orthodox monasteries, and from his lack of response to the conversation it appeared that he was not.

When it drew near the dinner hour the Doctor sent the two lunatics into their refectory, asked the four of us to come with him into the guest-house, and said good-night to the young man who gave him a nod which was affable in an exceedingly unsuitable way, which would have looked more appropriate over the rim of a glass of beer. The Doctor answered with a smile that was not without reserves. The rest of us went with him up the stairs that led to the gallery, here walled in though it is open in most monasteries, where the visitors are given *slatko*, the ceremonial offering of sugar or jam and glasses of cold water, and where the guests who stay overnight are given their meals. We were given plum brandy, and then shown into our bare little rooms, with the narrow beds and the tin basins. The windows looked out on the lake, which was now silver under a horizon of black clouds. Over the black range on our right a Niagara of radiant white mist was pouring, and some light, of unimaginable provenance, crept low along the ground and turned the trees to a hard emerald green. On the left the Albanian mountains were a deep violet, and below them the lights of villages shone on the water's edge. "Those lights that are quite near, that are almost at our feet," said the Doctor, "that too is an Albanian village. We are right on the frontier here. Indeed we were once actually in Albania, as a result of the first peace settlement. But this was a pilgrimage place for so many who lived in Yugoslavia that the frontier had to be corrected. Still, it will go hard with us if Italy ever strikes at Yugoslavia through Albania."

At dinner the Doctor sang a long grace in his beautiful and untroubled voice, and sat down to eat with us. We had little appetite, though the food was grown on the rich farmlands of the monastery and was well cooked by a lunatic who had been only uncertainly cured by Sveti Naum and had begged to be allowed to stay near the shrine so that he could resort to it at need; it was our fifth meal that day. But the Doctor ate well, for the day of an Orthodox monk is long and trying. The brothers rise between three and four and breakfast at eight, after the long service, and they have a midday meal at half-past twelve; but they do not have their supper until eight or later, though some of them have had another long service in the afternoon. As the Doctor sat drowsily over his coffee, Constantine said to him, "Who was the little one in knickerbockers

who was sitting down in the courtyard with the lunatics ? " The Doctor answered, " We do not know, but he comes here now and then." Constantine asked, " Does he say why he comes ? " " He says he likes the monastery," said the Doctor, with no great conviction. " What does he say he is ? " asked Constantine. " He has a Yugoslav passport," said the Doctor. " But I think he talks a little like a Saxon, a Saxon perhaps not of Saxony, but of Transylvania," said Constantine.

A pause fell, and we all drank more wine. " I am sad," said the Doctor, " because I am very happy here, and I may have to leave. I could not be happier, for I like showing guests the monastery, since in a way it is the most wonderful place in the world, and I like working with the lunatics, for many of them are made sound. That is a great joy to me, for my only sorrow on becoming a monk was that I could not be a doctor, and here I find myself helping with cures such as no doctor could ever work. But Bishop Nikolai says that perhaps he will move me to Zhitcha." Zhitcha is the seat of Bishop Nikolai's other diocese, it is the rose-red monastery where all the Serb kings are crowned, not a hundred miles south of Belgrade. " Why so ? " asked Constantine. " He says," replied the Doctor, " that in Zhitcha, which is an administrative centre, he has need of a modern man, as I am, but that here in Sveti Naum there is a living tradition which can safely be taken care of by the traditionalists. Besides, he is making it a rule to have none but Macedonian monks in Macedonian monasteries, and there is no reason why I should be an exception." He sighed deeply, but added, " It is a wise rule, for many reasons, even for the sake of Sveti Naum itself. There might come those who did not understand the place and the peasants."

There was much in what he said, though the rule was probably first conceived as a sop to the Macedonian patriots. The Doctor was a unique personality, who moved in a world of essences and remarked little of the material except its simpler pleasantnesses, such as the feeling of cleanliness. But most men who had been brought up within the orbit of Belgrade and Zagreb would be infected with Western ideas regarding the importance of material possessions and a written culture. When the Abbot and the peasant and the boy had been talking in the orchard that evening they had been divided by differences of age and function, which summed up to considerable differences

in authority; but there could be no idea of a fundamental inequality declared at birth, because the Abbot had probably come from a peasant home. There could be nothing more horrible than the idea of a priest coming to this place to treat lunatics and giving them, even if inadvertently, their first knowledge of a class system, thus betraying to them that they were at a disadvantage of which they were previously unaware. Its horror makes one realise that, however inevitable a class system may be in a complicated capitalist state, it must be a cruel burden on the human mind. It would also be horrible if, in a country where a certain proportion of the people must needs be ragged and dirty, those in mental distress should have to go for comfort to a priest who associated the idea of worth with whole and clean garments. There is a like therapeutic threat in the Western incapacity for appreciating a culture which is not dominated by literature, which makes Serb and Croat residents in Macedonia who have graduated in the universities of Berlin, Vienna and Paris, completely blind to the beauty of the peasants' costumes and dances and rituals and certain that they are barbaric. This blindness is indeed a more serious therapeutic threat than the other. There was published some years ago a book by an English doctor about his life as a superintendent in a lunatic asylum for African natives, in which he described how his work had been profitless until he had laid hold on their culture, and had mastered their myths and basic ideas. If this were true in the case of a primitive race, it must be even more so in the case of a people governed by the phantom of a complex culture.

It might be thought that none of these considerations could apply to a shrine, where the cure offered is miraculous, and therefore ought to be conceived to be as simple as a poultice, cold and in reverse action, the patient being clapped on a marble tomb and the supernatural left to take its course. But the cure is in fact far more complicated. It depends on bringing the patients, in as receptive a state of mind as possible, under the influence of Sveti Naum himself, that is to say, under the influence of a personality which has been perpetuated by word-of-mouth tradition and by the style of a building. And here too Western influence might be disastrous, for that personality has an exquisite appropriateness to Macedonia as well as to sanity. A grim man, Sveti Naum was not vanquished when he

fought among these rocks with the wild men who would be *heathen* ; he passed thereby a Macedonian test. He knew that nothing was too abominable to happen on this earth, but that probably all could be borne if one fought a soldierly campaign, numbering the enemy and recognising their kind, and drawing on all available forces, of which the mightiest was magical. It would have been a pity if the perpetuation of this message had been left to a Western sentimentalist, who would have represented Sveti Naum as a kind man who kissed the place and made it well, or a Western euphorist who would falsely claim that events were never horrible if properly regarded.

The character of Sveti Naum, or of the tradition that has formed round his name, is so definite that each time I have slept in the monastery it has affected my dreams, making them bleak yet not at all distressful presentations of what was not to be altered for the better in my life, from which I woke refreshed. But the next day my waking was late. I heard the clanging of the great bell, which announced the last phase of the long morning service, washed in cold water, looking across the lake at a shining world, dressed, ran across the courtyard, where a peacock was preening its tail in a pool of sunlight, and went in, or, as it seemed, down, into the dark church. There in the candlelight were my husband and Gerda and Constantine and Dragutin, two old nuns and a hunchback young one, the two lunatics we had met in the courtyard, and a third, a young peasant girl, who was accompanied by her mother.

The Doctor, with an acolyte standing by him, a lad in a torn coat with his socks in folds above his ankles, was reading the lesson ; and when he had finished the royal door in the iconostasis opened and there came out a priest dressed in crimson and gold, who stood waiting, in the space that is left between the congregation and the iconostasis, where there is a circle of white stone with a black star inscribed in it. One of the old nuns led forward the girl in the cloth coat, and she dropped on all-fours in front of him. Opening his bearded mouth to make way for a deep-lunged prayer, he swung a censer backwards and forwards over her. Her crouching body made a pitiful hieroglyphic of which the interpretation was very plain. Had the conception of sex been revised in the human mind, so that men are kind to those who give them pleasure, she would not have been mad. But the dark vault

and massive pillars of the church about us, the stern and ornate iconostasis, announced the unlikelihood of such a change, and *the inveterate inharmoniousness of life. In her place the bearded man crouched down and was censured. He flung himself at the priest's feet with the greatest eagerness, but once he knelt he would have nothing of the rite, he shifted from knee to knee, raised and lowered his head. Here was the source of life's disharmony, of such conceptions as had driven the girl mad. Here was the two-headed calf again, that would drink the milk with one head and spit it out with the other and so must die. Last came the peasant girl, who swung round as she got to the priest and turned her back on him, showing a pretty face, prettily tied up in a white kerchief. She was an idiot, and laughter shook her even when she crouched before the priest. Her mother, who was not old but was dried up by excessive grief as if she had been smoked like a ham, was by her side when she rose, and slewed her round to face the altar. Whispering, she pushed up the girl's hand towards her forehead, and there was achieved a clumsy sign of the cross. The mother must have laboured for years to teach her such a complicated movement.*

The priest went back through the royal door, and the Doctor sang another passage from the Mass. The idiot wearied and strayed from her mother, who was standing with her eyes shut in prayer, and spent a little time feeling the fluffy texture of my angora dress. Then she lost interest and stared ahead of her, and saw the back of her mother's head, round under a black kerchief. She put out her hand and began to finger it with an embryonic kind of love; the mother turned a patient face and drew her daughter back to her. Then the priest came out again from the iconostasis and stood holding a bowl full of the sacramental bread, the small flat loaves. The nuns took theirs avidly and happily, the girl in the cloth coat took hers as if it might perhaps be what she really wanted, the bearded man went up eagerly and then turned aside and began to straighten the tangled fringe of the shelf on the iconostasis where the icons stand, the idiot girl came back laughing, with crumbs on her mouth, which her mother brushed away. There was a prayer of thanksgiving, and suddenly the magic was over. The nuns and the priests hurried out of the church about their business, the lunatics sauntered out as if for them all clocks had stopped.

*While we were breakfasting in the gallery on coffee and milk and the sweet black bread they bake here from their own corn, I said to Constantine, "I wish you would ask the Doctor if they cure all kinds of madness alike." He answered, "No, he will not like you to ask that. And it is not necessary, for I can tell you what his answer will be. He will say that the mercy of God works on all people that seek it," and went on with his coffee. I said, "Please ask him," but he would not until I had tried to put the question in my stumbling Serbian. The Doctor gave a bright, furtive smile, like a hound thinking of the ways of the fox, and answered, "There are some cases of madness which can be cured by Sveti Naum, and some for which God apparently reserves another way. Neuroses we can cure. Many, many neurotics have I seen go from here sane men. And of psychotics I have seen some cured here, more, I think I can say, than are cured elsewhere, for I think that in the asylums they do not claim to cure dementia praecox, and that I have seen happen here several times. But where there is something organic, there we can do nothing. But I should not put it like that, for this condition may be altered to-morrow. Also I should be careful to point out that there must be a monastery somewhere where such things are cured. All I can really say is, that here we cure other things." He said that he thought the girl in the cloth coat would probably be completely cured, but he was doubtful about the bearded man, and that he did not expect that they would be able to do anything for the girl with the white handkerchief.*

This ruling on the general types and the particular cases is very much the opinion that an alienist trained in modern Western methods would have passed, except for the optimistic prognosis concerning the psychotics ; but the Doctor was speaking entirely according to his own experience and the tradition of the monastery, for his medical education had stopped short of any such advanced studies. In fact, there has somehow been worked out in this monastery a system of psychotherapy which is roughly comparable to that recommended by modern medical science, and which certainly achieves some degree of success. This is not unnatural. The patients come to the monastery for forty days, which is the length of a good holiday, and are given wholesome food, of a more varied kind than they have in their houses, which are in the poorest cases limited to bread and

*paprika*, and they are housed with more privacy. For many of them it is the first break in a life of continuous overwork, and for quite a number of women it is an escape from male tyranny. They are also the exclusive objects of the attention of a number of priests, who are the most important kind of people they know, which must be restorative to their self-esteem; and the effect of the ceremony in church that we had just seen must be overwhelming. These people are used to the Mass, they have often stood in church and known that behind the iconostasis the priests are celebrating the holy mysteries. Sometimes the curtain above the door is drawn back and they see them in a blaze of light, like to the saints and kings of old time shown in the frescoes and icons with their gorgeous garments and their long hair; sometimes they come out to dispense the sacramental bread, the most holy of substances. And suddenly it appears that they can come out for no other purpose than to help one's darkened brain.

After breakfast we went to look at the springs which feed the lesser lake. On the way out we went into the church, to have another taste of its powerful and astringent quality. But we did not stop, for at the tomb of Sveti Naum a priest was reading some form of exorcism over a peasant girl, whose mother stood by with her hands folded across her apron front in an attitude of despair. The girl was sitting on the floor with some sort of embroidered liturgical cloth on her head, staring not at all sadly ahead of her with immense black eyes sunk in a white face. In the sickly slenderness of her wrists and ankles, in the jaunty perversity of her expression, she recalled some young ephebe of Paris in the nineteen-twenties, some idol with feet of cocaine, dear to Jean Cocteau and his circle. As we went out of the monastery a terrific avian hullabaloo broke out in the archway over our heads, and we saw that the rafters were thick with the family life of swallows, which was being threatened by a malign pigeon; but this disorder was speedily righted by a lean old monk who ran out of the kitchen with a long pole, making fierce movements while he uttered mild exhortations, appealing to its better side. Outside, the landscape was as under a special blessing because it was so well watered. Its grass and trees shone with the radiance of youth, of perfect health.

We followed a path that ran round the lesser lake. Its centre was calm: across it a line of poplars were reflected



exactly in their ash-white wood and gold-green leaf. But the edge trembles perpetually, for here the waters of Lake Prespa burst out from the imprisoning rock in two hundred separate springs, the sources of the river Drin. Each has its own rhythm; some are quick, some are slow, some beat like a pulse, all are clear as crystal. "How strange that they should both be at Sveti Naum," said my husband, "this little church which is the blackest and heaviest thing I have ever seen, this expanse of water which is the lightest, brightest thing I have ever seen." One spring bubbled up, transparent as air, in a stone basin set among long grass in a roofless chapel; at our coming huge bronze and emerald frogs dived from the grass into the basin. We found another spring in a basin set in the open, and sat there for a time. Above us, on a hillside stained magenta with wild stock, munched a herd of goats; one kid, grey and delicate, lay sleeping near us, shining and lax like a skein of silk. I put out my hand and it fell on the most poetical of wild flowers, the grape hyacinth. We saw Dragutin, whose religious attitude to water we had often noticed before, reverently walking along the path by the lake, keeping his eyes on it and often standing still.

When the morning had worn on, we found a path back through the orchard where we had seen the Abbot and the peasants, and came back to the bridge over the Drin. Our knees against the ram and ewe, we leaned over and watched a mill-wheel turning under a grey tower that is said to be as old as the monastery, a thousand years or so, and is homely and majestic in the manner of its time. The brightness of the river was not to be believed. We saw Dragutin coming along the avenue of poplars and willows, and pausing for a gossip with the shepherd of a brown and white flock that was grazing on the cushiony turf under the trees. Presently he came up and, after pouring into my hand a stream of round white stones he had found somewhere, leaned over the bridge with us. As I played with the stones they reminded me of the sacramental loaves in the church, and there came back to me a poetic moment in the service I had witnessed on my previous visit to Sveti Naum. At a certain point in the afternoon service a nun went into the centre of the church, where there is a circle of white stone inscribed with a black star on the floor, and put there a rickety little table covered with a white crochet mat, such as one might see in seaside lodgings. Then the priest in crimson and gold

had come out carrying a plate of sacramental loaves and laid it on the table. Then he walked round the table, pointing towards the loaves a long cross with a lit candle fixed to the top *of its upright arm, where Christ's head must have rested, and halting at north and south and east and west to chant a spell.* This rite strongly evoked the death of Christ, the radiance of goodness, the sin of murdering it, and the cancellation of this sin by the consent of goodness to live again, that those who ate the bread must have felt that they were swallowing a substance like Christ, that they were absorbing goodness.

Here in Sveti Naum magic can be worked. The mind accepts it. That is to say, this is one of the places in the world which, by their material conformation emphasised by the results of the labours to which they have inspired their inhabitants, have a symbolic meaning. The existence of such places is one of the determining factors in history, and most of the great cities are among them. The shape of the earth around them, the mountains that uphold them or the plains that leave them open to their enemies, the rivers and seas or barrenness about them, recommend certain philosophies. These are never stated, but the people live or die by them: so do we sometimes go about all day depressed or exalted by a dream which we do not remember. The proof lies in the power of these places to imprint the same stamp on whatever inhabitants history brings them, even if conquest spills out one population and pours in another wholly different in race and philosophy. Whatever blood finds itself in Constantinople feels an obligation to cultivate an immensely elaborate magnificence under the weight of which it grows fatigued and slatternly; whatever faith finds itself in Rome becomes gluttonous of universal dominion; whether imperialism or communism is in Moscow it sits behind locked doors and baulks at shadows.

The argument here in Sveti Naum, which has been recognised for a thousand years, is a persuasion towards sanity; a belief that life, painful as it is, is not too painful for the endurance of the mind, and is indeed essentially delightful. It presents that argument in a series of symbols. There is the circle of mountains in which the great lake lies. There is the lake, the circle of water, which is a natural substance like the rock of the mountains. There is the other lake, far less in size, which is also of common water, of rain that falls from dark clouds and runs

down the hillsides, but which receives other water of a brighter sort, derived from the springs that flow from a distant mountain. This other water flows as a river through that lake and the great lake, immersed in them yet always distinct, and leaves them with its nature unchanged. There is besides these lakes and these springs and this river, a circle of green earth, where the grass and the trees grow tall without experience of drought and the herds browse and are never hungry ; and besides this circle of earth, which is the extreme of fertility, is a small circle of rock, the concentrated extreme of barrenness. On this rock there has been built a square of squat, dark, strong buildings. In the centre is the strongest, squattest, darkest of them all. This building is divided into two parts ; in the one there is light and people who can by singing and ritual evoke the thoughts and feelings which are to human beings as water is to the grass and trees and turf, in the other there is darkness and people who need this refreshment.

This is a picture of man's life. The difference between the mountains and the lake is as the difference between nature and man. The difference between the lakes and the river which runs through them is as the difference between man's bodily life, of the kind which he shares with the animals, and the life of his mind. There is the difference between the green earth and the barren rock, the difference between life when it goes well and when it goes ill. There is the monastery as example that man is not powerless when life goes ill, that he can assemble sounds and colours and actions into patterns which make spells and evocations, which persuade the universe to give up the antidote it holds against its poison. It is not pretended in any part of Sveti Naum that this revelation is made with facility. Even here truth does not grow on every bush. Bread does not become of like substance to goodness until it is laid on a little table in the centre of the church, over a circle of white stone inscribed by a black star, until it is enchanted by songs from the four points of the compass, and indicated by flame. It is the character of art and thought never to be easy. Nor is it pretended in any part of Sveti Naum that the revelation is complete, that all is now known. If the place makes a claim it is only that here for a mile or two earth corresponds with reality, which this correspondence shows not to be disagreeable.

*Ochrid V*

On our way back to lunch we went into the chapel of Sveti Naum and we found the sexton holding to the tomb a child of seven or so with a large head and a tiny hydrocephalous body, and calling over its shoulder to its mother, "Now you kneel down and start praying." But she continued to walk up and down, wringing her hands. She had a handsome face, though if one had seen her working in a field one might have thought her brutish; and probably she was, in some respects. She turned to my husband and cried, "But what am I to say? You've been educated, you must know what I ought to say!" "Don't talk to the gentleman," said the sexton, "talk to God." "But that's just what I don't know how to do," she complained. "I don't know what to say to God about this, there's so much to say; I don't know where to begin, it's such a strange thing to have happened." I thought again how malicious fate had been in choosing people with minds like this to be governed for five centuries by the Turks, who are so destitute of speculative instinct that they have no word for "interesting" in their language.

Just then the Doctor monk and Constantine came in and announced that we must go and have lunch as quickly as we could and hurry back to Ochrid, because Bishop Nikolai wished us to go to his palace that afternoon. We were extremely embarrassed by this, because we knew this invitation could only be a courteous acknowledgment of some money which my husband had given to one of the priests in Ochrid for his church. But nothing could have been less possible than to refuse this invitation. Gerda and Constantine naturally saw no reason why we should not accept, and though Dragutin showed us that he did, he made it plain also that it was no use resisting. In this place such an invitation was a royal command. So at three o'clock our automobile climbed the heights of the old town, which looked brilliant yet rigid under the heavy crystal of the afternoon heat, and we paid a visit which the East attended to in its own way, preventing it from being what was intended, but making it an unexpected delight.

It was entirely unlike a visit to an English episcopal palace. In a steep alley, behind a paintless door, we found a neatly

tumble-down house and garden. So farms look where the folks have much to do and little money but mean well. On the long grass in the garden a boy wearing a school cap played with a mongrel puppy, and a beggar slept face downwards. We went up from an entrance hall which had once been a stable and was not greatly altered, by a rickety staircase, to the Bishop's office, where four men sat and talked, two in peasant dress, two in Western dress. The Bishop, we were told, had not yet returned from a midday service some miles away. So we settled down to wait in a pleasant sleepy coolness. The room was exquisite; the wooden ceiling and a moulded recess, delicately carved and surrounded with plaster leaves, were of the properest imaginable proportions. For a time we leaned from the window and looked at the lake, which was now blinding white and seemed to rise in the middle, like a plate piled high with light, and at the hillside, where the strong sunshine lay on the earth that is crimson in the morning and evening hours and made it seem a pinkish breath blown on the rock; we looked down on the roof of Sveta Sophia, which even to the bird's eye reveals the elegance of its mass, the appropriateness of this tribute paid by an emperor to his heavenly peer; we looked at the shiny black buds of the ash-tree that sheltered the sleeping beggar.

Three-quarters of an hour passed. They brought us black coffee, but the afternoon was drowsy and we sank back in our chairs. Bees circled round a vase of lilacs on the table, an old priest talked politics with Constantine, the four men talked of a dispute about land in a village near Struga. I looked at the delicious ceiling and wondered to what period it belonged. It might have been early seventeenth-century work, but one can never be sure about what was done here after the Turkish conquest, for time stood still, and an isolated district would go on century after century repeating an idiom that had long perished in the rest of Europe. I ceased after an hour, and a servant brought us another round of black coffee, this time with a piece of Turkish delight on a toothpick in each saucer, because the Bishop was so very late. A tortoiseshell cat strolled in, and was told by the old priest that it had no business there, but so civilly that it jumped up on his lap and curled itself into a closed circle. Then the servant came in and told us that a telephone message had come to say that the Bishop's automobile had

had a breakdown far away, and that there was no use waiting longer.

*We went down the alleys into the main street of Ochrid in an afternoon that was already cooler, that had begun to breathe freely again. The visit had been extraordinarily pleasant, though it had been nothing at all, and least of all a visit. Constantine and Gerda had gone on ahead, and we dawdled, feeling charmed by everything. It happened that this was one of the several times in the day when the little boys come from the bakeries with trays of rolls, and my husband bought two of the kind we specially liked, little sticks of bread so fine that it was nearly pastry, dusted with poppy seeds, and we went into the big café near the lake, and ordered coffee and milk to drink with them. It must be admitted that this was sheer voluptuousness, for we were neither hungry nor thirsty, but surely it was of the mildest conceivable sort. Only a very small insect could have called it an orgy. Yet when Constantine and Gerda came into the café and sat down beside us, she said to him, "These people are always eating and drinking. I wonder if all English people are such gluttons." As she spoke she picked up my roll and began to eat it.*

This mattered little, for just then the little boys with the trays came into the café and my husband bought me another, but there followed a conversation which was excessively disagreeable in its imbecility. The waiter asked me if I was an American, and when I told him that I was not but had often visited America, he asked me if I had ever been to Dallas, Texas, where his brother was a pastrycook. I said that I had once been there, and that it was full of very good-looking people, and we talked a little. As he turned away, Gerda said, "Since you know America, I wonder if you know how American women do their hair?" "How they do their hair?" I repeated. "Why, like other women I should have said, but they spend more time on it." "No, no," said Constantine, "this is something very curious, you should hear it if you do not know about it. It is the way they keep their hair in order between their visits to the coiffeur." "But they have no special way," I said, "they all have permanent waves, and many of them wear hair-nets, many more than European women do." "No, they do not have permanent waves," said Gerda, "but every night they screw up their hair into little curls with toilet paper. That is

what an American lady did with whom I travelled on a Danube steam-boat, and she told me that all American women did the same." "There, is that not strange," said Constantine, "you have been to America and she has not, and yet she knows something about the Americans that you do not." "Wherever she went," Gerda told him in Serbian, "she would see nothing. I tell you, she is a fool." "I suppose this is the kind of conversation one will have in Hell," said my husband. "One can't do anything with it, it's so silly," I said. "I wish to God I thought it was from all points of view," said my husband, "but I think it is a part of something rather large. It is the kind of conversation a Roman woman might have had if she had been travelling with a Carthaginian woman in the third century before Christ. Eat up your roll and we will go. By God, she has eaten the second one too."

But just then there came up to us a lawyer of the town, whose home I had visited with Constantine the year before, who had heard that we were in the café and had hurried down to say that his wife would be glad to see us. I was pleased to go, for she was a woman of special heroic quality, who as a beautiful young girl had come here in the old Turkish days, to teach in a Serbian school, knowing that this was a Bulgarian district and therefore bitterly hostile to Serbs, but believing that it was Bulgarian only because of the propaganda of the Russians. She is a Demeter, her hair is still thick and yellow though she is not young, her voice is rich like clotted cream, and she has a "green finger"; flowers from her garden filled the vases, special in colour and perfume, and the *slatko* she gave us was not only unusually abundant, including quince and cherries and plums, but was all made of the fruits from her orchard, which were bigger than any others we had seen.

She had wished to see us half from quiet, abounding hospitality, and half from a measure of loneliness and despondency, arising from political origins. She realised like all the finer people we met, that with all his faults Constantine was a passionate patriot, and she had wanted his sympathy. They had a long talk about local politics in Serbian, which Constantine supposed I could not understand but which I was able to follow. She and her husband were grieved because the feeling of the town was still so pro-Bulgarian. They were even doubtful whether if a plebiscite were taken, Ochrid would opt

to be incorporated with Yugoslavia or Bulgaria. They were downcast about this, not chauvinist. It must be remembered that when the Serbians were attacked by the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Bulgarians joined their assailants all Serbs thought of them as traitors to their Slav blood, and that there were incidents in the war which poisoned this issue. There is a white column on the hillside not far from Ochrid which catches the eye from a long way off but which is never visited ; it commemorates four hundred Serbians who stopped here on the 1915 retreat, being sick and starved and weary, and were shot down by the local Bulgars. Also the Serbs of Ochrid, including this woman, were interned in Bulgaria during the war and were dealt with untenderly. She was heartbroken because Macedonians of Bulgar sympathies should not have been united to the Serbs by twenty years of what seemed to her not at all harsh treatment, and that they should not have recognised that the tyranny which threatened them from without was far greater than any restrictions they had to fear from within. " I cannot understand them," she mourned ; " if Italy conquers us there is an end to all liberty for all of us, for Serbs and Bulgars, for Yugoslavia and Bulgaria."

As if to comfort herself with the fruitfulness of the earth, which stands by man in spite of his political errors, she went out of the room, and came back with a brood of week-old chickens in an apron. She tipped them out over a writing-table, and let them cheep and perk among the ink-wells and the blotters, smiling though her brows were still joined by worry. Then there was a knock at the door and it appeared that, as sometimes suddenly happens to travellers, we had been received by the social soul of the town. The old schoolmistress who had been at the feast in the church had sent along to say that she knew the lawyer and his wife were coming along to her Slava, and that it would be pleasant if she brought the foreigners along with her too. This was delightful, if only for the light it cast on the town's intelligence service, but I was also enchanted at the opportunity of seeing a Slava (the word means " Holy "), which is the distinctive social custom of the Serbs. It looks like a birthday on a very generous scale ; all day the family keeps open house and offers food and drink and amiability to all friends and acquaintances and even passing strangers. But it is an inherited date, which never varies from generation



to generation, and it is said to be the anniversary of the day on which the ancestor of the family who first forsook his paganism received baptism. This is plausible. One of the constituents of the feast is a dish of boiled wheat, like our frumenty, which is called by a word meaning "something killed by a knife for a sacrifice". The inference is that the new-made Christians were told that they need not kill beasts at the altar of their new god, but could eat a dish of wheat instead. That we came too late to see, but we were given some of the Slava cake, which also makes some reference to conversion. It is a very large and extremely rich cake of wheat-flour sweetened with honey, almost like a cold pudding, and historians have traced its connection with fertility cults; but it has to be made in a mould marked with the name of Jesus Christ, and it has to be blessed by a priest who eats the first slice.

Constantine had gone back to the hotel, to telephone his office in Belgrade; but Gerda and my husband and I went with the lawyer and his wife, and joined a circle of people, numbering about twelve, who sat round the old schoolmistress's bright, bare room. She was obviously very happy simply in the act of entertaining, no matter whom she entertained, and told us stories of her career as a spy during the last war. The first time she had ever seen the sea, that was, and she was frightened enough anyway, but the ship she was on had to go and be torpedoed. Still it had all been great fun, and she only hoped the young people would have as good a time as she had had. Every five minutes two pretty little girls in their early teens, who were her adopted daughters, carried round trays covered with little cakes and conserved fruits and glasses of wine. Presently an old peasant woman, who was the grandmother of one of the little girls, came in and was given a chair of honour. Supping her wine, she asked the lawyer about a case in which he had lately taken part. A Christian and a Moslem, it seemed, had combined in a small job of highway robbery and had quarrelled over the division of the spoil, at which point a second Christian had come in and had helped the Moslem murder the first in return for a small share. The second Christian had confessed, and he and the Moslem had been sentenced to fifteen years.

Everybody became very animated, and it was evident that the case had caused a stir in the neighbourhood. This struck

me as an extraordinary testimonial to the work of Yugoslavia in Macedonia, since under the Turks highway robbery was so common that a man never travelled unless he had money enough to engage an armed escort. There was evidently a great divergence of opinion about the sentences. The old peasant woman said she had heard endless discussions about this in her village, and she simply didn't know what to think about it, so she wanted to hear what people who could read and write thought. The schoolmistress, who had been brought up in an established Serbian town, said, "No doubt about it at all, they should both have been hanged," but the lawyer, who had been born and brought up in Macedonia, disagreed. It turned out, however, that he was doubtful about the confession. I guessed that there was some suspicion that the police might have resorted to the third degree, a practice which had been firmly implanted in this part of the country by the Turks, and which even the most conscientious administrators find it difficult to extirpate. But the lawyer went on to say that, as for the robbery part of the charge, he did not think that that should have been punished so heavily, for after all it was a rich man whom they had waylaid, and all wealth was stolen from someone. The old schoolmistress said, "Oh, shucks! That sort of thing can be gone into on the Day of Judgment, but here below it is better to leave it alone, and take it that in the meantime a man can't have what isn't his." The lawyer said that that was all very well, and that is a rule we live by now, but he thought we must try for something better. "Oh, you two are always trying for something better, I know you do, and I love you for it, but this Auntie," said the schoolmistress, tapping herself on the chest, "this Auntie can't rise to it." So the lawyer and his wife laughed and kissed her good-bye, and we left with them.

As we walked back to the hotel by the darkening lake, I said to Gerda, "Thank you very much for translating what they said for us," and she replied, "It is all very well my translating it, but did you understand it? Do you realise what horrible people they are? They are all Marxists." My husband said, "What do you mean? What they were saying has nothing to do with Marxism. It sounded more as if the lawyer and his wife were old-fashioned Christian Socialists, but they might not even be that, they might be simply humanitarians." Gerda repeated, her face heavy with hatred, "They are all Marxists."

## ROAD

Gerda drove with us from Ochrid to Bitolj, for it is a journey of only a few hours, and there could be no pretence that it meant prolonged discomfort if she joined us. Constantine sat beside Dragutin, who gave him some very good gossip. "You'll never guess who I saw walking down by the lake yesterday evening. The Kostitches, those people who have got that big draper's shop at Skoplje and another at Bitolj and another at Kossovska Mitrovitsa. They must be staying down here, she's got a sister married to a functionary here. They're nice people and made of money, they've got dinars the way other people have lice. But they've one trouble, they haven't got any children. It worries them terribly. They feel, and of course there's sense in it, that there's no good having all that money if they've nobody to leave it to. They're always in and out of the church praying about it, and they've spent a fortune on doctors. Well, if old Kostitch would give me a good dinner and a hundred dinars, she would have a boy all right. I know money shouldn't come into that sort of thing, but he's a rich man and would never miss it. However, I think she's a poor creature. He once sent her alone to Vienna to see a doctor, and a sensible woman would have done something else than see a doctor, but I know the maidservant of her best friend, and she says she didn't. But here, we must stop, there's something we ought to see."

He made us walk to a slope where the red earth was bare and blasted, and showed us a tiny pot-hole, with as much steam as comes from the spout of a kettle, when it is first boiling. "That's a volcano, that is," he said, "and though it's small it works. Any poor beast that comes near it — pouf! he's dead." I did not believe a word of it, and then I looked down and saw beside my foot the shrunken body of a hedgehog, cut down in the flower of such sins as a hedgehog may have. It was Dragutin's day, the earth behaved as he saw it. For when we got to the top of the pass the car suddenly leaped forward and then stopped, and he jumped out and ran back on our tracks. He returned very sadly, saying, "I thought I had killed a snake, but it isn't there." A little later, the car made the same sickening leap again, and this time the snake was maimed, and was easily finished off with a heavy spanner brought down on its

*head and its heart. "Look at the black lattice on its back," he said, gloating over its carcass, "that shows it's a really dangerous snake, kills in half an hour; there's a lot of them about here."* I asked Constantine, "Do many people die of snake-bite here?" He tried to do his best for Macedonia. "Not nearly so many as in Bosnia. In Bosnia very many people die of snake-bite. But," he added patriotically, remembering that Bosnia also was in Yugoslavia, "they are not really very many."

After that the road dropped to broad red plains planted with corn and vines, and brought us to the dull town of Resan, which has the air characteristic of towns on southern plains, of having been pressed flat by the heavy thumb of the heat. It is historically remarkable on two counts: in 1903 it was the scene of a magnificently courageous rising of the Christians against the Turks, and here Mustapha Kemal first formed his idea of the Young Turk movement and spread it among his fellow-officers. We sat down in the central square and drank coffee and a man came up and spoke to us in American. He was a man of about forty-five, who had been in Chicago for ten years and had recently returned here on some family errand. We asked him if he could remember anything of the 1903 insurrection, and he said he could. He had wakened out of his sleep and had run out into the street, and seen the sky all red over the Turkish barracks. Then there had followed a terrible time, and he and many other boys had never seen their fathers again. We were then interrupted by the approach of George, the Statesman's Despair.

George, it appeared, had been in America for five years, ending in 1928. He had worked in Detroit and had made fifty dollars a week. He had had to come back to do his military service, and could not get readmitted to the United States. "But I want plenty to go back," he said, "America fine country, nopoty outtawork, nopoty poor." We suggested that he might find a difference if he went back now. "No," he said, "you don't know Tetroit. Nopoty there poor, nopoty outtawork." The man from Chicago began to scream at him and wave his arms. We had evidently stumbled into a dispute that had, I suppose, gone on in this dreary little town for years. He turned to us and shouted, "I keep on tellin' this guy there's been a depression!" "Nother thing," continued George, "there's no taxes in America. Nopoty heard of such a ting.

No army, neither." The man from Chicago held his head and groaned. My husband and I left them to it, and went off to gape at the Officers' Club which the Ataturk made the centre of his conspiracy. It is a white square house, which has a strange and fateful look because the big balcony that used to run across the first storey has been taken away, and the brackets that once supported it project like gallows-heads, and the glass door that led on to it now opens on nothingness. Beside it a tumble-down house, that must have been a pretty villa in the great garrison days, lies strangled in its lilacs.

At the café we found Gerda eating bread and kaimak, which is a substitute for butter much nicer than sounds possible, made by boiling milk down to skin and compressing the skins. It was an innocent action, but she felt it ran counter to her pretensions of asceticism, and she explained, "I would not be eating this as a rule, but when I saw Dragutin killing the snake I felt so upset that I had to have something to eat. Did that not strike you as a barbarous thing to do?" When she had finished we made a detour and left the Bitolj road to have a look at Lake Prespa, which nobody I know of has ever visited except Edward Lear of the Limericks, who mildly penetrated to its shores so long ago as eighteen-fifty, in pursuit of subjects for his pretty and oddly sensible water-colours. We came to it by a chain of villages where life must be ghastly in the winter winds and ghastlier still in the summer heat, but which were full of lively-eyed people. We stopped to laugh at two water buffaloes lying with consequential expressions in a stream too shallow for them while nimble boys and girls, all with skins of rose and gold and some with gentian eyes, splashed them with the water. Beyond marshes where storks and pelicans stood among tall white grasses, we found the lake, hyacinth-blue among mountains that were no colour at all, that were simply the colour of light which has met something hard and can go no further. It is as beautiful as Lake Ochrid, but not magical, not sacred. An authentic miracle is worked on the waters at Sveti Naum.

On the far shores woods fell steeply to the water, and nearer they made a small green blur on the deep blue waters. "On that island," said Constantine, "was the palace of the Bulgarian Emperor Samuel, he who had a mighty Balkan Empire in the tenth century, and was defeated by the Byzantine Emperor Basil known as the Bulgar-killer, though to modern ideas he did

worse than kill. He took fifteen thousand Bulgarians captive, and all he blinded, save one in every hundred, to whom he left one eye, so that they might guide the rest home to their Emperor. And when he saw his army all blind he could no more, for he was a true emperor, though he was a Bulgarian, and he died." "Can we go to the island?" I asked. "It is not fortunate," said Constantine, "there the frontiers of Greece and Albania and Yugoslavia all meet, and there are many soldiers all jealous of the honour of their countries and with nothing to do, and so they would shoot, and also there are on the island many enormous snakes." So we walked about on a little headland high above the lake, where there were many flowering bushes and deep springy turf, and we breathed the unbreathed air and saw the untarnished light. "Glory be to God!" said Dragutin, jumping up and down, "it's as good as asphalt, this turf." "Listen," said Constantine, "he is in his soul a chauffeur, he speaks in chauffeur's images, he sees a chauffeur's world. It is like the play a Frenchman wrote, a play which was supposed to be written by a dog for dogs, and began with the direction, '*Le rideau se lève sur un os*'." "And glory be to God!" cried Dragutin. "These herbs smell good! Lie down and roll on it! That's the way to enjoy it!" So we all threw ourselves down and rolled; and a shepherd came by and watched us, nodding and smiling. "Yes, it's good," he said, "but you ought to come here in July or August, it smells even better then."

### *Bitolj I*

We lingered so long beside the lake that we had to have lunch at Resan instead of going on to Bitolj. In this meagre little town we had a better lunch than I have ever been given in an English cathedral town, with good chicken soup, lamb and paprika stew, and excellent yoghourt. Because my husband and I were contented Gerda became flushed with anger, and began to complain to Constantine in Serbian. "These people," she said, "haven't had the decency to ask me to go on to Petch. They'll expect you to go on with them, you're useful to them, and I can go home to Belgrade by myself, that's what they expect." It was true that we had not asked her to go on to Petch. We had felt under no obligation to prolong the torment

of the last fortnight, during which she had never expressed any emotion towards us milder than hatred. My husband and I strolled out of the restaurant into the street, and in a stationer's shop, where I bought a magenta tin pencil-sharpener that sharpens one side of a pencil better than any other I have ever possessed, he said, "We must tell poor Constantine that we can go to Petch quite well without him. We cannot tolerate this any longer." And when we got back to the automobile this was precisely what Constantine told us. "I will give you introductions to a functionary I know there," he said, "and I will go home with my wife, I have been away for long enough."

We mounted to a pass between bare mountains that as we approached was exactly spanned by a rainbow, and stopped on its height to see the deep bluebell line of Lake Prespa for the last time. Dragutin pointed to a purple cloud that dragged twisted veils across a grey-green sky, one cloud out of many such, and said, "Thunder!" A minute later, in that very cloud, a sword flashed. He enjoyed the storm, singing a Wagnerian chant as he drove, but it ended in pelting rain, and we had to drive past fields of wild narcissus without picking any. He paused once to point out very respectfully a village where all the men went to America to work in automobile factories and then came back to buy land. "Dodges they have made, and Buicks, and Chevrolets, yes, and Lincolns," he said, his voice full of what Wordsworth described as natural piety. Then we followed the trough of a valley about which we all used to read in the last war; for Bitolj is Monastir. This valley and these mountains were occupied by German and Austrian troops, joining with their allies the Bulgarians in the East against the Greeks. Here innumerable men of all these armies were killed and died of wounds and fever; and to those who were spared Monastir and Macedonia are names standing quite simply for torture.

Yet Bitolj is one of the fairest of all cities. It lies at the valley mouth and spills out into wide plains, shading itself with poplar groves; and till full summer there are snow peaks to be seen beyond the plains. It is one of those cities which prove to our amazement that we Westerners have never even begun to understand what town-planning means. Thirty-five thousand people live in it, yet from every point of the compass it looks like a garden, and there is no part of it so congested or squalid

that it would be unpleasant to live in it. The hovels here are hovels, but they are accidents, they mean that somebody has been unfortunate and lost his money or his wits. Its commercial quarter is delicious : two lines of neat shops like boxes run on each side of a little river in the shade of acacia avenues. There is no town I know where an open door more invariably discloses a sensuous and crafty garden ; and the cats — I apply here a serious test of civilisation — are plump and unapprehensive. The women, even the poorest shop-assistants, dress with simple elegance which would be respected by such dressmakers as Alix or Maggy Rouff, and the whole population is kind without intrusion. This was the Turkish capital of Macedonia, and there is visible an urban tradition of immense antiquity.

But I have a special reason for feeling tender towards Bitolj. It is the only place I have ever visited where the whole community rose to defend me. When I was here with Constantine we were walking down the new High Street, deep in conversation, when a miserable old Moslem woman, like all her kind veiled and swathed in black, tottered out of a doorway to beg of me. I gave her a two-dinar piece. We went back to the hotel and drank coffee ; and when I came out a miserable old Moslem woman tottered forward to beg of me. I gave her a dinar. We then crossed the river into the old town and were bargaining with a Jewish dealer in embroideries when a miserable old Moslem woman tottered forward to beg of me. I gave her a two-dinar piece. I returned to the new town and was about to enter the hotel when a miserable old Moslem woman tottered forward to beg of me. I was about to give her a two-dinar piece when a large number of people rushed forward to stay my hand. Though I had had no idea that anybody was taking the slightest interest in my doings, much less following me, they were in a position to tell me that each time it had been the same old Moslem woman, and that to catch me a fourth time she had bargained with a cab-driver to take her the short drive across the bridge at the fee of half a dinar. This last touch seemed to the population to introduce a sordid element into the transaction which did their town no credit.

It was distressing that I could only repay the good-will by seeming to agree with them, although I have never liked a beggar so well as that spirited old lady, just as I have never liked a waiter so well as one in a café on the edge of the river



who also would not have been approved by the public-spirited population of Bitolj. It was a small café, patronised only by young men who kept their hats on, pushed well down over their ears, while they drank coffee and played moulin with an air of cheating. It was inappropriately decorated by reproductions of Royal Academy pictures in which the courtiers of Louis XV were represented as perpetually testing their very tight white satin knee-breeches in the minuet. When Constantine put down a ten-dinar piece for our coffee, for which he should have been given eight dinars change, the waiter's hand flickered over it for an instant, and he said innocently, "Funny thing, I thought there was a ten-dinar piece there. Did you pick it up again?" I suppose that if I had been looking at his hand I would have seen nothing, but I was staring past him at one of the Royal Academy pictures and the corner of my eye saw the coin run up his palm into the cuff. He was quite amiable when he was asked to send it down again.

Bitolj has, in fact, a great deal of that amusing rascally parasitism which is a part of the Arabian Nights atmosphere; and in the past it must have been an Arabian Nights city. There is a proof of the Turkish wealth the town held in the fabulously extravagant marble tombs that fill the Moslem graveyards with colossal wedding cakes; and there were then many very rich Greeks sitting by the fountains in their shady gardens, and some very rich Jews. But it suffered a great deal of material damage in the war, and still more some years later from an accidental explosion which accounted for many of the wrecked houses one can see all over the town. People who can see no good in Yugoslavia complain bitterly that she has ruined Bitolj by making Skoplje the administrative capital of the province; but it is hard to see how she could have been expected to keep as a capital a town that was only on a branch railway line and within a few miles of a frontier, when Skoplje was on a main line and nearly a hundred miles from the frontier. Still, Bitolj should have a future as a tourist centre, for when the acacias are out it is a fantastically lovely city, veiled in white flowers and sweet scent. There is a café on a hill-top outside the town which is in the centre of an acacia wood, and it is an exquisite pleasure to sit there on the evening of a hot day and watch the sunset discovering the fourteen minarets of the city and lengthening the poplar shadows on the plains.

Because of rich memories I was eager to go out and show my husband the sights of the town as soon as we had put our luggage in the hotel. But I was not sure that all was going to work well when I met Constantine in the corridor and he said, "Yes, I think we must go out, we will go out with you. I will make my wife a pleasure by taking her to see the German war memorial." The German war memorial at Bitolj is one of the most monstrous indecencies that has ever been perpetuated. They invaded Serbia and looted and burned their way through it and then planted themselves on these hills and murdered Macedonia with their guns, till they were beaten out by the superior merit of the Allies. It has seemed good to them to bury their dead on the top of a hill where their guns were mounted for the martyrdom of the city, and to build a wall round it which gives it the likeness of a fortress. Nothing could say more plainly that they have no regret for what they did there, and intend to come back and do it all over again as soon as they are given a chance. It is the only war cemetery I have ever seen that is offensive; and it is doubly offensive, for it insults both the country where it stands and the unhappy soldiers who are crammed pell-mell inside it, without a single record of their names or their regiments. There could be nothing more disagreeable than to accompany Gerda on a visit to this unfortunate symbol of her race, but there was no help for it, as at that moment she came out of her room and said, "I am so glad that after all we are finding time to look at the poor dead soldiers from my country; I had thought that you would not give me that pleasure, and of course you must decide where we are to go, not I."

When I got downstairs my husband had already got into the automobile and was sitting beside Dragutin, so I could not warn him where we were going. Ordinarily he would have been a sympathetic visitor to a German war memorial; from his earliest childhood his life had been divided between Germany and England, and there might well lie in one of the graves some boy he had known at kindergarten in Hamburg. But this is not an ordinary war memorial, and his reactions to it were as mine. When he got out of the automobile he looked up the steep hillside and exclaimed, "But what's this?" I hastened to his side and said, "The German war memorial." He answered "Nonsense! It's some sort of fortress." I hurried

him on in front of Constantine and Gerda, explaining the unfortunate outing to which we had been committed, and we reached the top some time before they did. My husband gaped at the building, which is quite simply a high circular wall, entered by a slit of a door in a low squat tower. "But it is nothing but a fortress dominating the town of Bitolj!" exclaimed my husband. "And what an odd cemetery, because it is immensely massive yet so small that it can hold hardly any soldiers." "There are three thousand of them," I said, "packed into a small circle and covered with a kind of heath that was brought from Sweden, I do not know why." "Poor devils!" said my husband. We tried the door but it was shut. "It does not matter," I said, "there is nothing there, only a black marble coffin, carved with the names and arms of the German states, standing just inside the door, and on the ceiling above it was a mosaic of an eagle with its wings outstretched." "But this is not at all German," said my husband; "think of the intense family feeling in German life, of the affection that is shown all over a German graveyard. But what is least pleasing is its insult to this country, for it makes a threat of return. Well, here they are, we shall say no more."

We walked round the memorial, looking up at the snow mountains towards Lake Prespa, looking down at the deliberate loveliness of Bitolj, and when we had made the circuit we found Constantine and Gerda standing at the entrance. "It is most beautiful," she was saying, "it is a most worthy memorial." Then she turned to us and said, "Why do you say nothing about it? You don't like it. I looked up from below and I saw you standing here and looking at it with your English coldness. I suppose you think it ridiculous that Germans should have a war cemetery, we ought to be buried like beasts." "No, no," said my husband, "we were only saying that we did not like it so well as that really beautiful German war cemetery outside Belgrade." "That we thought more beautiful than any we had ever seen in France," I added. "I was not speaking to you," said Gerda, and turned back to my husband. "And why do you not like this cemetery so well?" she cried. "Why not?" "Oh, God!" said my husband, suddenly despairing. "I don't like it because it pays no sort of respect to the individuals who are buried in it and because it is a tactless reminder of the past to an invaded people."

Gerda threw up her arms and shouted to the sky, "Now he has insulted my people! He has insulted my whole people! It ought to be published in the newspapers that English people say such things, just to show what sort of people they are. But we Germans don't do such things, because we are too kind, and we want to be friends with England! But think of it, here I am, far from my home, and he insults my blood, the German blood!" Her face was crimson and she was weeping. Slowly and heavily she began to run down the hill. Below her a checkerboard of green and crimson hills tilted towards the wooded mountains, on a straight road beside a winding river cattle and carts trod slowly among jets of sunlit mud, the well-bred town sat white under its red roofs among its shady gardens. We saw Dragutin, who was standing beside the car, look up, catch sight of her and fold his arms, tilting his head on one side. Constantine breathed, "The Germans are all like this. They are a terrible people." My husband said, "Nonsense, many Germans are not a bit like this," and then, being an exceedingly polite man, stopped in great embarrassment, since what he had been going to say must obviously have been something like, "Your wife is indeed terrible, but that's because she's herself, not because she's German." Instead he said, "I am very sorry that I have offended your wife." Constantine said miserably, "Oh, it is all right, everybody knows that you English cannot help being tactless," and began to walk downhill, kicking the stones in front of him, like an unhappy child.

"Oh, why did you say it?" I complained, as wives should not, while we followed him. "God knows I was making the most hideous faces at you." "I could not help it," my husband said. "I knew that she would go on and on insulting both of us till she got the truth out of me, so I let her have it. But how disgusting it all is! To create a scene over a war cemetery! Over a lot of dead boys! It is worse than the Bishop's feast." "It is all part of the same thing," I said. "Religion and death are not so important as being a German, nothing must exist except Germanity." When we came to the foot of the hill, Dragutin was sitting at the wheel with a discreet expression and Gerda was walking round and round the automobile. My husband went up to her and said, "I am sorry that I offended you," but she flung away from him, crying, "Do you suppose that words can heal the wound you have dealt me! How can

you expect me to tolerate hearing the German people being called tactless?" She said to Dragutin, "Open the door, I am going to sit beside you," but paused to tell us, "And this car in which you can hardly bear me to travel, you will be more comfortable in it henceforward, because I am going back to Belgrade. I cannot stay any longer with people who insult me and my people."

Dragutin asked for no orders, and we were too shaken to realise that we had given him none. He drove us through the town to the ruins of Heracleia, the Roman city which lay a mile or so beyond it on the Via Egnatia, the Roman road that ran from the Adriatic through Albania to Salonica and Constantinople. Its excavations are at a stage that can interest only dogs and archaeologists, and my husband and I went and sat for a few minutes in the Orthodox cemetery, which straggles over the hillside near by. I have a deep attachment to this cemetery, for it was here that I realised Macedonia to be the bridge between our age and the past. I saw a peasant woman sitting on a grave under the trees with a dish of wheat and milk on her lap, the sunlight dappling the white kerchief on her head. Another peasant woman came by, who must have been from another village, for her dress was different. I think they were total strangers. They greeted each other, and the woman with the dish held it out to the new-comer and gave her a spoon, and she took some sups of it. To me it was an enchantment; for when St. Monica came to Milan over fifteen hundred years ago, to be with her gifted and difficult son, St. Augustine, she went to eat her food on the Christian graves and was hurt because the sexton reproved her for offering sups to other people on the same errand, as she had been wont to do in Africa. That protocol-loving saint, Ambrose, had forbidden the practice because it was too like picnicking for his type of mind. To see these women gently munching to the glory of God was like finding that I could walk into the past as into another room.

I had liked it, too, on that first visit, when our guide had looked over the plains towards the town and had said, "Look, there's a funeral coming. But it's only someone old." "How can you tell that?" I had asked. "There are so few people following the hearse, and they walk so slowly," the guide explained. "When somebody young dies then the whole town thinks it a pity and comes to the funeral. Look, here is the tomb

of Anastasia Petrovitch. She was only twenty and you can see from the photograph on her cross how beautiful she was. Everybody in Bitolj turned out for her, the road from the town was still black with people when she had been carried into the chapel. But when old people die, it is natural, and nobody cares except a few other old people." And presently the hearse and the procession arrived, and truly enough all the mourners were old. We went with them into the chapel and held lit tapers in its darkness and heard the unfalsified grief of the Orthodox Church office for the dead. "What a parting is this, my brethren! What a lament is made of this happening! Come then, embrace him who is still for a little while with us. He is to be handed over to the grave, he is to be covered by a stone, to dwell in the shadows, and to be buried with the dead. All of us, his kin and his friends, are to be separated from him. Let us pray the Lord to grant him rest."

We saw Constantine coming along the woodland path, through the leopard patches of shadow and sunlight. "There is one thing," I said to my husband, "you were awful, unspeakably awful, not to have held your tongue by the German cemetery, but at least we have got rid of Gerda." "There you are wrong," said my husband. "I am not," I said. "Did you not hear her say that she would go to Belgrade to-morrow rather than stay with people who have insulted her?" "I heard her," said my husband, "but she will not keep her word. Think of it, to-morrow we are going up Kaimakshalan, the mountain where the Serbs drove out the Bulgarians and won the decisive battle of the Eastern Campaign. It is evidently a pleasant expedition. She will certainly stay for it, and she will certainly be no more agreeable. But at Skopje, if you and I have to get up in the middle of the night and go away in secret, this thing must end." When Constantine got to us he was beaming. "Now you will see that my wife is really a very sweet woman," he said, "she has said that to please you she will that we all go now to the French war cemetery." In embarrassment, therefore, we drove to what is one of the most affecting places in the world. It lies out on the plains among flat fields edged with willows and poplars, and it is a forest of flimsy little wooden crosses painted red, white and blue, each with a name or number, and each with its rose tree. It must have cost as little as such a cemetery could cost, and it must be a comfort

to the kin of the dead to see that they lie so neatly and apart. There are seven thousand of them, and they have not yet stopped coming, for the shepherds still find skeletons up in the mountains and bring them down next time they go to market. Thus had Gerard Michel just returned to the plains after twenty-three years. He had been tied up in a linen bag, and it could not be believed how pitifully light he was in the hand. When we set him down in the little outhouse where he awaited a priest and the grave-digger and went out into the open air, that seemed now to smell more strongly of life than is commonly noticeable, the snow peaks were red in the sunset, and every cross had its long slanting shadow. "Think," said Gerda, as we looked on the wide field of graves, "think of all these people dying for a lot of Slavs."

### *Kaimakshalan*

"To-day we go to see where my people saved civilisation," said Constantine, halting at the table where we were breakfasting in the sun, three red roses in his hand, "to-day we go to see where Serbia won the war for all you other peoples. I have been to buy a little flower for my wife, because she is very sweet this morning; she is in such a good humour that she has said she will stay to-day and go to Kaimakshalan with us." When he had gone I said, "We must make the best of it," and my husband said, "I wonder if there is anything we can do to rob the day of its horror." "There is," I said, "the hotel people say that they can only give us sucking-pig or lamb paprikasch for the picnic lunch, and she has told us she does not like either. Let us give her that glass of tongue we have been keeping for an emergency." "Yes, that looks a friendly offering," said my husband, "we will produce it on the picnic ground, for she may be embarrassed when we first meet." In this he was wrong, for Gerda, when she came down, showed no sign of knowing that any unusual situation needed to be bridged.

Our drive took us over the plains, past earth-coloured villages and through lands cut into extraordinarily small divisions, mere tastes of fields, which were marked off by animals' skulls mounted on posts. We saw fifteen people ploughing on what looked to us to be no more than five acres of ground. Some nomads passed us, taking their herds of

cattle and horses and sheep from the winter to the summer pastures. On one village green a party of gipsy women sat with their brilliant aprons thrown over their heads, silently rocking to and fro ; some of their men, we were told, had been fetched up to the Town Hall for a breach of the law. Over the Greek border we saw villages of white square houses, shining like loaf sugar, built for the refugees the Turks drove out of Smyrna. We came at last to a little house, like any other village house, set on an insignificant little hill, which was the headquarters of King Peter and Prince Alexander during the Macedonian campaign. It was two rooms and a little garden full of irises. We walked uneasily about it, because the imagination can do nothing with what happened here. It is too strange. Here King Peter and Prince Alexander sat and looked at an amphitheatre of low hills before a wall of mountains and reflected that who took the peak called Kaimakshalan, which is to say the Buttcrub, dominated the plains, and that it must be taken, though it could not be taken. Their performance of this impossible task puts them among the great men of the world ; and the other event which came to pass in this cottage also puts them in some prodigious category, but it is not known what. The Salonica conspiracy proves that history has no authority, because there are secrets of the first importance that can be kept, and motives so complicated that they cannot be discovered by guess-work.

It was here that in 1917 Alexander ordered the arrest of a number of people, including " Apis " (Dragutin Dimitriyevitch), and Tankositch and Tsiganovitch, the two minor members of the " Black Hand " who gave Princip the arms for the Sarajevo *attentat*, and Mehmedbashitch, the Moslem boy who failed to throw his bomb at Franz Ferdinand and then rushed to the station and took train for Montenegro. They were charged with conspiring against Alexander's life. Apis and the Black Handers were sentenced to death and shot ; and Mehmedbashitch was condemned to twenty years' imprisonment. Not one soul in the length and breadth of the Balkans believes that they were guilty : and it is now an offence against the law for a private person to possess a report of the trial. It cannot be mentioned in a newspaper and would not be mentioned in a speech, and I have met intelligent young university graduates who had never heard of it.



The commonest explanation of this mystery is Byzantine in flavour. It is said that Alexander had lost heart and become convinced that he would have to sue for a separate peace from the Central European powers, and that he therefore wanted to be able to say, "Yes, the people who conspired to assassinate Franz Ferdinand were shocking scoundrels, but they had nothing to do with me. In fact, they later tried to assassinate me also." And if when he said this the conspirators were already dead or in prison, he would be saved the embarrassment of being asked by the Central European powers to hand them over, which he could not have done without alienating his people. This theory is supported by some words repeated to me by a German friend of mine as having been uttered some years ago by a Serbian in Berlin. This man, who was an ex-officer and had been for many years in exile, said to him, "Yes, I would like to be back in Serbia, but 'Apis' was my chief, and 'Apis' warned me that I must fly at once, because they meant to kill all our group, and only 'Apis' was going to stay, because he himself thought it would be for the good of our country if he died." My German friend had no idea of the event to which these words referred, and had remembered them only for their odd Slav suicidal spirit. The complicity they attribute to "Apis" is not at all incompatible with his character as we know it, dominated as it was by an obsession with violent death unleashing historical crises.

Yet that solution is not satisfactory. I have met a Moslem Herzegovinian, now middle-aged, who was an intimate friend of Mehmedbashitch, and he tells a story which compels belief that there were yet other elements controlling Alexander's action. This Moslem had a command in the Salonica campaign, and one day after the trial he received a smuggled letter from Mehmedbashitch asking him to go and see him in a Serbian prison on a Greek island. He contrived a visit to him and found the boy in a pitiable state of anguish and bewilderment. He had been arrested in France, and before he went back to Greece the French had treated him not only as if he were guilty of a serious crime, but had made repeated efforts to compel him to confess something, he did not know what. Now, it is obvious that the French cannot have been sympathetic accomplices in a scheme by which the Serbian Royal Family was attempting to make a separate peace. Nor can the Serbian

authorities, who knew that the charge which was going to be made against Mehmedbashitch was false, have pressed the French to obtain a confession from him. But the mystery did not stop there. Now that the Serbian authorities had had him tried and sentenced for conspiracy to murder Alexander, he was still being asked to confess to something. The Herzegovinian had no doubt that Mehmedbashitch was not only innocent of conspiracy to murder, but was also ignorant of the matter, whatever it was, to which he was expected to confess. He was a worthy but unimpressive youth of no importance, in whom people in charge of dangerous enterprises would be most unlikely to confide. When the Herzegovinian returned to the front he went to Alexander and told him that in his opinion Mehmedbashitch was being badly and foolishly treated. He did this without fear, because he had a record of honourable service to the Serbian cause. It is odd that a monarch should be suspected of putting his subjects to death and imprisoning them on false charges, and at the same time should be trusted to respect a young officer who had shown fidelity to the national ideal. Alexander listened to him intently and then put to him a series of questions which he found completely incomprehensible. "I am sure he had something in his mind," he said, "but I have no idea what it was, and he was very unhappy about it, he was desperate and very angry." A short time afterwards, and apparently in consequence of this conversation, Mehmedbashitch was released, and is still living in Sarajevo, a carpenter with a marked disinclination to discuss politics.

There is no hypothesis that fits these facts into a recognisable pattern. Sometimes it seems to me possible that they relate to a story of which rumours are heard, though now only faintly, in Sarajevo. There were obviously two crimes committed against Franz Ferdinand: one active, by Princip and his associates, one passive, by the royal guards who did not guard. It is said that yet a third had been prepared, and that there were people in Sarajevo on that St. Vitus' Day who had expected the guilt to be theirs. Nobody will state quite clearly who is supposed to have inspired these people, but the guess would be that it was an Austrian influence too malignant to remain passive. It might be that this is correct, but that there had also been involved as cat's-paw some indiscreet foreign personage, capable of being tempted to this rashness by an ambition that had been inflamed

by frustration. If the assassination should turn out to have fruitful consequences he might have made a bid for power which, backed by the army, might have come near to success. This is simply guess-work. But it has the recommendation of explaining why Alexander should feel an intense interest in the crime of Sarajevo long after it had been an accomplished fact. It must be remembered that Alexander, like the rest of the world, had never seen the records of the trial and therefore would not be aware that Mehmedbashitch was a mediocrity with the most tenuous connection with the crime. This makes the mystery more impenetrable by historic method, for Alexander was probably working on totally false clues. He was also one of the most secretive men that ever filled high places. Among the purple irises I thought of the long shelves of university libraries, their striation under lofty vaults, the reflected light that shines from historians' spectacles, and I laughed.

Thereafter our road ran up into the mountains, where the Black Drin, a river which many British and French soldiers will recall with loathing, tumbles between bouldered hills. Then grass banks, studded with cowslips, rose to beechwoods, and later we came to firwoods carpeted with yellow pansies, violets and very large forget-me-nots. These flowers gave one less pleasure than we could have believed because of Gerda's effort to discover why Kaimakshalan was famous. Constantine explained that the Germans and Bulgarians had held the mountain, and had fortified it with heavy artillery and machine-guns, and that the Serbians had climbed up the mountains and taken the fortifications. "But," objected Gerda, "if the Germans and the Bulgarians were up there with machine-guns, why did they let you Serbians get up there?" Constantine said, "Well, that is just the point, they couldn't prevent us." She asked, "But how did you get up?" He answered, "We climbed up, we walked up." "Nonsense," she said, "a man cannot climb up a mountain where people are shooting machine-guns down on him." Constantine answered — and it sounds so well in German that I will leave it in that tongue — "So dachten die Deutschen und so dachten die Bulgaren, aber so dachten nicht der König Alexander und die Serben!"

After a pause Gerda asked, "Were there mostly Germans here or mostly Bulgarians?" He answered, "Mostly Bulgarians." "Ah, now I understand!" she explained exultantly.

"That explains it all. It was treachery. The Bulgarians betrayed the Germans to you Serbs." "I think it was not so," said Constantine wearily, "the Bulgarians hated us then and for long after." "Nonsense!" said Gerda, "you were all Slavs, you would combine against our German blood. It was treachery. The Bulgarians betrayed the Germans to you. Of course people could not climb up a mountain if other people were shooting down on them, and the answer simply is that they did not shoot. But in any case, how did the Serbs come to be here? I thought they had been driven out through Albania to the sea. How did they manage to get back here again?" "They came through Greece," Constantine replied. "Oh, through Greece, did they!" cried Gerda. "And yet you dare complain of the Germans for going through Belgium into France!" "But Belgium was neutral and Greece was our ally!" squealed Constantine. "I suppose to you and the English that makes a great difference," said Gerda ironically.

But now the high mountains took us into their peace. We left the automobile on the bare highlands just below the snow, where there was a village of chalets, sightless with their shuttered windows. The nomads who come here in the summer and make cheese had not yet dared come up, so late was the spring. We trod on turf drab with the long hardship of ill weather, but starred with the hard blue light of glory-of-the-snow and the effete mauve flame of the mountain crocus, and looked up at the long ridge of snow, five miles long, that is furrowed by a pilgrim's way to the church on the high peak. There could be no question of going there without proper climbing boots, but we followed the track as far as we could go, the crystal air making us all happy. Gerda became contented, and was pleasant to Constantine. We glacised down a slope and found a boulder surrounded by a sudden affluence of pansies growing sheer from the surrounding snow, and sat on it, staring down at the battlefield that tilted forward to the plains, seamed with deep valleys sunk in firwoods. The joy of the mountains is real, because it is of the blood and the muscles, where life has its ultimate stand, and yet it is false. Everything that I saw or heard as I sat on the boulder pleased me, yet the battlefield below me proved that I had been born into an age too uncertain about fundamental ideas for continued existence to be easy.

Yes, the proof was there. Surely there are certain things about a battlefield which can be taken for granted by everybody ; the first being that if men fought well there for a worthy object they proved themselves valuable human beings. How can it not be so ? There are objects which are worth fighting for : the fate of the Slavs under the Turks proved it once and for all. That non-resistance paralyses the aggressor is a lie : otherwise the Jews of Germany would all be very well to-day. A race that has not good soldiers must be enslaved by any neighbouring race that has them : a race that has not the soldierly characteristics of courage and discipline cannot in later ages refuse to fight unnecessary wars and insist on proceeding with the work of civilisation. If ever peace is to be imposed on the world it will only be because a large number of men who could have taken part in the drill display by the Guards or Marines or at the Royal Tournament turn that strength and precision to the service of life.

This I believe to be true, in spite of the obvious defects of many professional soldiers, which afflict them surely not because they are soldiers, but because they are professional. It is doubtful whether army officers of high rank are more limited or unsound in their general ideas than lawyers or doctors of an equivalent degree of specialisation. It is in any case unlikely that a soldier would hold as silly ideas about any sphere of civilian activity as vast numbers of civilians would hold about this battlefield. To countless thousands, even millions of people in England and America, the slopes of Kaimakshalan would have no meaning whatsoever except as a place where a lot of people had perished ingloriously, as they might have in a railway accident, because they were stupid enough to get mixed up in a fight. Many Americans, owing to their inexperience of aggression, sincerely believe that all wars are planned by armament manufacturers and that no people ever suffers any real maltreatment at the hands of another. They would not credit the simple fact that the Germans and Austrians and Bulgarians had invaded Serbia with the intention of murdering the inhabitants and seizing their property. Not having been educated to accept the possibility of such an act by the contemplation of a large area where the Turks had certainly done this very thing to the Balkans, and had gone on doing it for five centuries, they feel that this must be a fable spread by Vickers or Skoda.

There has also been in America a wave of cynicism, entirely mindless, destitute of all content, save "Oh yeah" and "So what", which, by a strange twist, results in a bland acceptance of the whole universe that has never been surpassed by Christian Scientists. An automatic scepticism regarding stories of atrocities leads to a rosy belief that every member of an invading army behaves with the courtesy of a cinema theatre usher. The Serbs must have been mistaken in believing that the Germans and the Austrians passed through village after village, wrecking houses, smashing the furniture, emptying corn and pouring wine and oil into the mud, and trampling on the icons. Any peasant in the invaded countries over thirty can tell you that it was so, but innumerable Englishmen and Americans, over and under thirty, can tell you that it was not so. This battlefield was therefore to them an area of pure nonsense, discreditable to the human race.

And so it is to some extent to many English intellectuals. If the Serbs had done something . . . something . . . something, they need not have fought. So one feels, when one is young, on hearing that a friend has to have a dangerous operation for cancer. Surely if she had not eaten meat, if she had not eaten salt, she need not have had cancer; and by inference one need not have cancer oneself. Yet cancer exists, and has a thousand ways of establishing itself in the body; and there is no end to the ways one country may make life intolerable for another. But let us not think of it any more, let us pretend that operations are unnecessary, let every battlefield seem a place of prodigious idiocy. Of this battlefield, indeed, we need never think, for it is so far away. What is Kaimakshalan? A mountain in Macedonia, but where is Macedonia since the Peace Treaty? This part of it is called South Serbia. And where is that, in Czecho-Slovakia, or in Bulgaria? And what has happened there? The answer is too long, as long indeed, as this book, which hardly anybody will read by reason of its length. Here is the calamity of our modern life, we cannot know all the things which it is necessary for our survival that we should know. This battlefield is deprived of its essence in the minds of men, because of their fears and ignorances; it cannot even establish itself as a fact, because it is crowded out by a plethora of facts.

Dragutin followed us up the track, making as he went little posies for Gerda and myself. "I feel a fool in this holy place,"

he said, "because I was too young to be in the war." "Yes, indeed, the place is holy," said Constantine. "If we could only bring a thousand Croats up here and show them how liberty is won." "Yes, yes," said Dragutin, bursting into laughter, "show them how liberty is won, and then hang the lot of them." He meant the Croats no actual harm; nothing would have been further from his mind than that he would offer any physical violence to a Croat, but such was his lively and telling way of referring to the political differences that rive Yugoslavia. "But you can't sit up here all day," he said, "holy place or not, I have driven you enough to know that that won't do for you instead of your dinner."

We ate at a tourist hut ten miles or so down the mountainside, very Swiss among the pinewoods, save for the soldiers' graves in a clearing across the road. Two young soldiers who were in charge of the hut came out and set up a trestle table for us, and I laid out the food. Gerda did not help, and I thought this was because she was happy sitting in the sunshine that came through the cold air all light and no heat, a bodiless excitement. But she was still in the grip of her obscure misery, and when we gave her the tongue she asked grimly, "What is this?" Weakly I explained, "We thought you might like this, as you said you cannot eat sucking-pig and paprikasch." To this she answered, "It is not that I cannot eat sucking-pig and paprikasch, but I do not see why I should eat them all the time." She then drew the tongue towards her and cut herself a helping without reluctance. Because my husband held the plate steady for her, her face crumpled up with racial hatred too irrational to find words.

On the step of the automobile Dragutin sat and ate his lunch between the two young soldiers, who had the dutiful and dedicated look I have noticed so often in Yugoslav conscripts. His lunch was, as always, ascetic and chosen in accordance with the principles of sympathetic magic: he liked lean meat and rough black bread and paprika, and he regarded as weakening all soft and slippery things like butter and kaymak and sardines. "Hey, did you ever hear the like of this!" he called to us. "These two say that they know it is a great honour to be the guardians of Kaimakshalan, and they are content in the daytime, but it's terrible in the night, because they hear the dead soldiers calling for their mothers." "What do they say?" asked Constantine. They say "'Yao matke! Yao matke!'"

one young soldier told us. The words mean, Alas, mother ! "And of course the others, the Germans and the Bulgarians, say it in their own languages," added the other. They both shuddered and went on eating with the solemnity of young calves at a haybox.

I had always wondered whether people who have a primitive attitude towards fighting, who regard it as a necessary and noble activity, were perhaps spared the full realisation of the piteousness of death in battle. Now I knew, and life was by so much the more disagreeable ; and I had a further testimony to the fatuousness of such pacifism as points out the unpleasantness of war as if people had never noticed it before. I regretted the amateurishness of much in modern thought, but realised that this was only proof of the recalcitrance of the material on which thought must work. On my journey home I felt unequal to sharing the vision of Dragutin which constantly pierced to the primordial disharmony of life which I would have liked to forget. Driving down through the colourless yet radiant hills he came to a stop that we might see in the sky above us an angry monogram which was an eagle fighting with a stork. Later we got out and drank from a spring that leaped out of a rock to join the Black Drin, and Dragutin shot out a finger at an emerald lizard a foot long that leaped through the grass between my feet. "It is poisonous," said Dragutin. "It is not," said Constantine, but I knew he was only being patriotic. Back in my seat, I fled from this dangerous universe into sleep.

I woke and found that the automobile had broken down beside a fountain, and that Dragutin was tinkering with the engine under the appreciative eyes of three superb women in magnificently embroidered robes, who each were carrying a blue-enamelled tin jug with queenly grace. The lot of all the beautiful women who go down to the waters in romantic lands has been irradiated as by sunshine at the passing of the amphora and the coming of enamelware. Dimly I heard Dragutin tell them that the car had broken down because we had passed a priest riding on a donkey, and the queens splutter into laughter. I slept again, and when I woke we were near the outskirts of Bitolj, and I looked across a patch of grass to a little house that stood in a vineyard, with a porch of vine-clad poles, and a flimsy iron balcony under its upper windows. "Stop the car !" I said. "Stop the car !"



I had reason ; for on the balcony stood a man dressed in shining grey garments who was announcing his intention to address the plains by a gesture of supreme authority. The proud stance of his body showed that he had dug the truth out of the earth where it lay under the roots of the rock. The force of his right arm showed that he had drawn fire from heaven, so that he might weld this truth into our life, which thus shall not perish with our bodies. The long shadows lay bound to the plains, the mountains' bleakness was explored by the harsh horizontal beams of the falling sun ; they, and the men and beasts who laboured on them to no clear purpose, would know their deliverance so soon as they had heard him. Near by there squatted on the grass beside the roadside two wretched veiled women, faceless bundles of dust-coloured rags, probably Moslem divorced wives of the sort, more pitiable than the beggars of the towns, who hang about the fields and stretch out their hands to the peasants. It seemed as if they must spring up and throw aside their veils, never to beg again, as soon as he had spoken.

But he would never speak. He was a scarecrow dressed in rags which had been plastered in mud to give them solidity against the winter, and he had been stored on the balcony till it was time to put him out among the fruiting vines. His authority was an exhalation from a bundle of straw, as the murmured promise of salvation from the Roumanian gipsy in the central square of Belgrade had been an exhalation from the action of alcohol on her tissues. The soul can be uplifted, it can be seduced into seeing an end to its misery and believing that all has been planned for its good from the beginning, by a chance concatenation of matter that in fact means nothing and explains nothing, that is simply itself. So potent was the argument of the scarecrow to the eye, that it made for incredulity regarding all other exaltations. It might be that the Mozart symphony which had issued what I had taken to be a proof of beauty from the restaurant radio on the Frushka Gora was not in a different category from the scarecrow's gesture and the gipsy's promise, but only at the other end of the scale, and that it proved nothing save that flesh has a wider range than straw, and that there is a subtler drunkenness than comes of wine.

*Bitolj II*

The scarecrow was a true citizen of Bitolj, for the town constantly presents pictures so strange that the mind can only take them as symbols, though they never disclose their significance. As the dusk fell we went out for a stroll under the acacia trees by the river, and looked into the shops, which were little bright caves in the darkness. At the great mosque, whose swelling cupola and towering minaret and lovely plaster decoration speak of delicacy and power, of a clean hand holding a sword, we stared through a wrought iron gate and saw a procession of grave and beautiful elderly men passing under the acacias to the porch, their *fezes* shining as crowns of mystery because the evening glow caught the white bands which betokened them to be Moslem priests. We were halted by the second and really affecting German war memorial; a carillon in an old tower which twice a day rings out, "*Ich hatt' einen Kameraden, einen bessern findst du nicht*", evoking pictures of golden-haired boys dying thirsty and fevered in this land which is cruel even for the hardy brown amongst us. We hung behind a Jew of the tall hawk-like kind and his wife who wore a close cap rimmed with gold sequins and a purple gown of seventeenth-century Spanish fashion; and we saw them go softly, murmuring Spanish, into a home refined almost to decadence in its contempt for the exuberant and its concentration on propriety. We left this peepshow only because we had risen early and were to rise early again, and on the way home a final emblem and mystery was disclosed to us and not explained. The sound of passionate speech made us look through a doorway, and there in a warehouse, with sacks of grain lying on the floor and ropes hanging down in loops from the rafters, under an oil-lamp stuck in the wall, a man leaned on a broken column of classical appearance, entirely inappropriate to the place, and addressed three men as if he were preaching them a gospel. They looked at him with grave and pursuivant anxiety, for each word he spoke was taking him farther away from them. One man began to stir uneasily, and it could not be told whether he was going to surrender to the speaker and throw himself at his feet, or rebel against him and strike him. But as we watched our attention was distracted by the rhythm of a sleeper's breathing,

close at hand. We looked about and found that a man in peasant dress with a mountaineer's round fur cap was standing just beside us, leaning against the hinged frame of the door, fast asleep. He was a giant, perhaps seven feet tall.

The day gave us other mysteries, though of a more prosaic sort. As we had motored into the town from Resan I had seen a tumble-down mosque with some very elaborate tombs in white marble carved in the Moslem Regency style which I find so enchanting and so surprising; and we went there in the early morning to take some photographs. For half an hour or so we scrambled over the rough ground and through the long grasses, among tombs which, if they were mere columns, were leaning drunkenly to right or left, and if they were solid erections were burst asunder by bushes which, like the poppies and corn-flowers beside them, derived rich colour and profligate growth from the uncoffined dead. The monuments were well worth a film or two. They had apparently been produced by a pastry-cook under the influence of Persian art. Such sugary little scrolls and swags, such sissy little flowers in pots, such coy little etchings of swords on the soldiers' tombs, so much valid accomplishment lavished on invalid objects. There is here a double paradox. This is so odd a form of art to have sprung up among a military people, and so odd a form of art to be treated with such wild negligence. When an elderly lady makes an exquisitely hem-stitched handkerchief or a beautifully embroidered baby's gown it is not suffered by her or those to whom she gives them that they should go into the rag-bag; and even less is this the case when it is not a female but an ephebe who is responsible for the craftsmanship. Yet it seems to be no protection whatsoever to an object in Moslem possession that it precisely accords with Moslem taste.

But this was not the only paradox to be detected at this mosque. Two veiled women came out of the mosque to see what we were doing, bundles of dusty blackness, who were caretakers with the difference that it was evidently not expected that they were to take any care of the place. They took us in to see it, and it was inside as it was outside. I think that nowhere in England or America would there be a plot of ground so disordered as this graveyard, unless it were the garden of a home inhabited by a lunatic; and the mosque itself was used as a store by the peasants who farmed the neighbouring

land. They had piled hurdles and coops and hoes between several wooden tombs which must have belonged to men of great eminence, for they were painted green, which is the Prophet's colour, and were surmounted by little globes on which there hung rotting kerchiefs which had originally been laid there by pious hands. The plaster had fallen from the walls in thick scabs, but had left two frescoes intact, one a landscape of ochre palaces among blue trees, another a whimsey of bluish curtains caught back with rose-coloured bows that might have been the work of any Madison Avenue decorator. As we looked at them the plank cracked under my feet, and there was a sickening turmoil below. From a hole in the floor on the other side of the room a rat scurried to the open, holding a nameless white object in its mouth.

It seemed incredible that in a city full of Moslems half a dozen pious workmen should not have joined together to put in order a place that had obviously been a centre of worship for many honourable families; and the place seemed to imply the decadence of a pithless people until we went out, and saw through an open door the home of the caretakers, which was formed by partitioning off a space from the porch of the mosque. It was impossible to imagine a room that spoke more clearly of an established civilisation, a society which took it for granted that to live in cleanliness and order is agreeable. The bare boards were ferociously clean, along the wall a bench made of old packing-cases was covered with cushions of hues chosen by an educated taste, and on the walls were pieces of rugs which, though they were stitched and faded, at least alluded to the finest aesthetic traditions of the East. On a little inlaid table stood a brightly polished ceremonial coffee-set and a little loom, where a fine linen towel was being woven in an exquisite design. "Good God," said my husband, "one can never be sure of anything in this country."

It was market day. When we got back to Bitolj peasants from the mountains and the plains were sitting on the low walls that edge the river embankments, facing the shops, with their goods in little heaps at their feet. First of all the men sit in a line, with bundles of onions and garlic and baskets of early strawberries and tangled masses of hens tied together: and then the women sit with their lesser goods before them, basins of eggs and little handfuls of spinach and clusters of dark-red

paprika, the sunshine pouring through the acacia branches and lying in bright diamonds on the white kerchiefs they wear on their heads. The goods brought by some of the women are so trifling that it can hardly be doubted they come to market not so much for commerce as for gossip, which is as animated here as it was in Sarajevo. When my husband photographed some of them and got involved with a donkey which poked its head over his shoulder, they all laughed and joked with us, quick in speaking and in taking up other speakers' points.

While we were playing with a goat and its kid a man in an offensive suit came up and asked us in American what on earth we were doing in such an uninteresting town as Bitolj. He himself was a Macedonian, but he had early emigrated to Toronto, and was a shoemaker there, and had come back just for a holiday, and he thought this a Godorful place. We spoke to him of America, but after the fashion of his kind he knew nothing of it except cheap automobiles, road-houses and radios. It cannot be too firmly stated that the average man who emigrates from one of the more primitive countries to America is lost to European civilisation without being gained by American civilisation. The subsequent generations he begets may acclimatise themselves to the new tradition, but the state of vacuity in the mind of the man who actually makes the transition cannot be exaggerated. He is removed from the economic hell with which Europe punishes the people who perform the function most necessary to its survival and grow its food for it, and he is lifted to what is for him the economic paradise with which America rewards the people who help it to get into debt by making unnecessary manufactured goods. Therefore his primary needs are so astonishingly well satisfied that he believes himself contented; but he forgets everything that his own people have learned about birth and love and death. This would have happened to him just the same, of course, if he had emigrated to any really big city in Europe which was thoroughly remote from his tradition; but he is much more likely to go to America.

The state of idiocy which this transition had induced in this particular man can be judged from the fact that he winked at us, jerked his thumb over his shoulder, and said, "Going to the Paris Exhibition, hey?" To get away from him we left the cattle market, and joined a small crowd centred round two men

sitting at a table, who were all looking at a white pack-horse that was being led up and down. "I think this is the market where they sell the goods of the peasants who cannot pay their taxes," said Constantine. "If that is so, let us buy the white horse and give it back to its owner," said my husband. Constantine danced with joy. If he had been left a fortune he could not have been more pleased. "Do you mean it?" he asked. "Do you really mean it?" "Yes, I think it would be an agreeable thing to do," said my husband.

Constantine bounced through the crowd, crying to the officials, "Stop! Stop!" as if he had ridden with Dirck and Joris from Ghent. He gave something to the occasion quite beyond our power. The officials acted up to him and received the news with great pleasure, and when they had ascertained that it would cost my husband three hundred dinars, which is about six dollars, and made sure that he would go to this outlay, they announced the news to the people round them, who behaved like a stage crowd, turning to each other and making gestures of surprise. The main person concerned turned out not to be there. The owner of the horse, his friends assured us, was running round Bitolj trying to find a money-lender who would let him have the money without security. But the details of the gift were not settled quickly, for the officials had to draw up a deed of gift, by which my husband returned the horse to the owner, and before he had signed it there was a scuffle at the back of the crowd and the people near me said, "Here he is! Here he is!" I turned and saw a bearded man wearing a round fur cap and tawny homespuns, but I thought they must be mistaken, for he was showing no signs of pleasure, and was indeed baring his teeth in fury and lifting a club as if to strike a little group of people who had just been assuring us that they were the owner's friends.

"That cannot be he," I said, but a fattish young man in a saxe-blue sweater answered, "Indeed it is, but he does not yet understand. Are you Americans?" "No," I said, "we are English." "English or American, you have done a good deed," he said sententiously, "but I hoped you were Americans, for I love America very much." "So do I," I said. "Are you going back soon?" "No," he answered; "when I was in America I made a big mistake. All my people here have been smugglers' father and son. Before the war we were smugglers at Riyeka

on the borders of Montenegro and Turkey, and since the war here in Bitolj, for the Greek frontier is very close. So when I went to America I thought that smuggling was there as it is with us, wrong but not very wrong, and I used to take liquor in over the Canadian border on a truck, and I did not think nothing of it. Then one day there was a bit of shooting and I was sent up for a stretch. But what I do not like is that afterwards I was deported. It is terrible," he said, as if he were singing a folk-song, "to be deported by a country which you love." He became scarlet, his eyes filled with tears. I found myself saying sympathetically, "Never mind, never mind, lots of my friends have been deported," though this is not true.

Gulping down his sorrow, the young man said, "But here is the owner of the horse; now he understands what you have done, and he wishes to thank you." "But what did he think at first that we had done?" "When you looked at him before," explained the young man, "he was saying to his friends that they had done ill by him in letting you buy the horse, for anybody could see from the clothes of you and your husband that you would want an excessive rate of interest for the money you had lent him. He took your husband for a kind of moneylender we have here, who have no homes and grow exceedingly rich by travelling from market to market and getting peasants into their power. He meant no harm. It is a mistake that anybody might have made." My husband said sadly, "We have been taken for itinerant moneylenders, my dear, and you have committed yourself to the curious statement that many of your friends have been deported from the United States. I think it is perhaps time that we left this town." But now the owner of the horse was standing in front of us, wringing my husband's hand and sputtering gratitude out of a mouth full of long white wolfish teeth. "But what is he talking?" asked my husband. "Surely it is not Serbian. Perhaps he is a Greek." "No, he is not talking Greek," I said, "he is talking tough baby. Listen." "Gee, I am really grateful to you," he was saying. "This will bring me luck, it sure will, and I'll say it ought to bring you luck too. Now won't you let me treat you to jus' a little whiskey? No? Not just a shot?" At my elbow the shoemaker from Toronto had appeared. "Is it true that you have bought this man's horse back for him?" he asked. "For crying out loud, why did you do it? Why did you do it?"

When we had left the crowd, no single member of which asked us for money, though it was proved that we had enough to be generous and some of them had probably not enough to eat, we went back towards the town and came by chance on a little street where a number of women, and women only, were sitting on the kerb. "They are selling dresses," I said with delight, and so they were : new dresses for such peasant women as had come into the town to work and had neither the homespun cloth nor the leisure to make their own clothes and were still shy of Western attire, and old clothes that had such fine embroidery on them that they would be worn again. All these dresses were of the standard Slav pattern. They were made of white or cream homespun linen and were embroidered lavishly on the hems and sleeves and more sparingly around the neck. Nearly all of these were serious works of art. That will not be believed by those who know only the commercial peasant art of Central Europe. The cross-stitched blouse of Austria and Hungary is tatty and ill-bred, rightly regarded by the aristocrat and the highbrow as vulgar and by the proletarian as funny. It fails because the themes of peasant art are so profound and its technique so intricate that it requires a deliberation hardly to be found elsewhere than in peasant life or in the sphere of scholarly and dedicated people not in the least likely to make blouses. Women distracted by the incoherent interests of the modern town, or working at the rate necessary to make a living anywhere in the orbit of a modern town, will not have the experience to form the judgments about life which lie behind most of these embroideries, nor the time to practise the stitches and discover the principles of form and colour which make them strike the eye with the unity of flowers. A precisely similar process of degeneration can be seen in Tin Pan Alley, where the themes that are dealt with by folk-song and by the lyric poets are swallowed by shallow people in a hurry and immediately regurgitated in a repulsive condition.

But these old women, who looked at once hearty and tragic, who were able to grin broadly because early and profuse weeping had made their faces unusually mobile, were dealing in uncorrupted merchandise. All the embroidery had a meaning. The first I picked up had a gay little border to its hem, a line of suns with rays, half an inch across, with trees in between them and stars dancing above them. The suns had black centres and



rays, and their circumferences were alternately orange and green, and the trees were alternately green and blue, and the stars were green and blue and brown. The design stood on a black line of stitching, under which were two broken lines of stitches in all these colours, and then there was a corded edge oversewn with buttonhole stitches in black, deep blue, light blue, crimson, green and purple, with the black predominating so that there was an effect of darkness stirring with the colours of creation. But the little suns and trees and stars would not take creation too seriously, it was as if fun was being poked at it. This significance was no fancy of our own, for the woman who sold it to me and her friends smiled as they spread it out for us, and looked grave as they showed us one that was my second choice. On this some woman with a different temperament had given up her mind to thought of the majestic persistence of nature and its untender character, and had fixed on the linen a number of dark upright trees, breaking into aloof flowers, harbouring indifferent birds. The design was so highly stylised as never to tempt the eye to mere gaping by its representation of fact; it refused to let the trees be more than the symbols of a mood.

I found yet another design that was purely abstract. Bars and squares of black with raised designs and touches of purple in the solid background depicted no natural object whatsoever, yet evoked certain exaltations. It appears doubtful whether Tolstoy ever saw a peasant. In the imbecile work *What is Art?* he asserts that peasants only appreciate pictures which inculcate a moral lesson, such as, for example, a picture of a woman giving food to a beggar boy, and that only a person perverted by luxury can care for art which was created without a specific didactic aim. If he had put his head out of his window and looked at his own village, he would have seen — for embroidery of this kind is done, with varying degrees of merit, all the way up Eastern Europe from the Black Sea to the Baltic — that peasants, more than any other class in the modern community, persistently produce and appreciate art which is simply the presentation of pleasing forms. It was not improbably because Tolstoy was a bad man that he wished art to do nothing but tell him how to be good, and perhaps these peasant women can permit themselves their free and undidactic art because their moral lives are firmly rooted. They had been trodden into the dust by the Turks, condemned to hunger for food and to thirst

for blood, but they had never forgotten the idea of magnificence, which is a valuable moral idea, for it implies that the duty of man is to make a superfluity beyond that which satisfied his animal needs and turn it to splendid uses. I bought here a wedding dress perhaps twenty or thirty years old. It was a composite of eight garments, a fine chemise, a linen dress embroidered round the hem and sleeves till it was almost too heavy to be worn, a purple velvet waistcoat braided with silver, a sequin plastron to be worn over the womb as a feminine equivalent to a cod-piece, and a gauze veil embroidered in purple and gold. It was a memory of Byzantium and the Serbian Empire ; solemnly it put sequins where the emperors and empresses had worn precious stones, it made of its wool and its flax and what it could buy from the pedlar something that dazzled the eyes a little as the Byzantine brocades had dazzled them much. Even so in the folk-songs of these parts do they sing with nostalgia of gold and silver, not as wealth, not as mintable material, but as glory to be used for shining ornament.

That they should remember glory, after they had been condemned for so long to be inglorious, is not to be taken for granted, as an achievement within the power of any in their place. A tradition is not a material entity that can survive apart from any human agency. It can live only by a people's power to grasp its structure, and to answer to the warmth of its fires. The Churches of Asia became extinct not because Islam threatened them with its sword, but because they were not philosophers enough to be interested in its doctrine nor lovers enough to be infatuated with the lovable throughout long centuries and in isolation. But these Macedonians had liked to love as they had been taught by the apostles who had come to them from Byzantium, they had liked the lesson taught by the emperors that to wear purple and fine linen encourages human beings to differentiate themselves in all ways from the beasts, they had liked, even inordinately, the habit taught them by Byzantine art of examining life as they lived it and enquiring into their destiny as it overtook them ; and since they had still their needles they turned to and managed to compress those strong likings into these small reflective and hieratic designs.

The old women were pleased at our enthusiasm. They are of course not fully conscious of the part their embroideries play in the preservation of their ancient culture : when an English-

woman plays a sonata by Purcell she is not likely to feel that she is maintaining English musical tradition. Yet these women are certainly aware that they are about some special business when they sew. I am told by an Englishwoman who has collected such embroideries for twenty years and knows their makers well that it is an esoteric craft, those who are expert in it do not give away their mystery. Many of the themes which often reappear in the designs have names and symbolic meanings which are not confided to strangers, and a woman will sometimes refuse to discuss the embroidery she has worked on a garment made for her own use. When they marry they make caps for their bridegrooms, and about these they are always resolutely reserved. Here is, indeed, another proof of the impossibility of history. There cannot be taken an inventory of time's contents when some among the most precious are locked away in inaccessible parts and lose their essence when they are moved to any place where they are likely to be examined carefully, when their owners are ignorant of parts of their nature and keep secret such knowledge of them as they have.

I bought several dresses and jackets and hung them over my husband's obliging arm while I sought for more; and he would not let me take any of them from him when we turned homeward towards our hotel. We stopped as we came to the bridge over the river, and looked for the last time at the lovely line of women sitting in the shadow of the white acacia trees, their veiled heads dappled with sunlight. "We must come back again," I said, "again and again to the end of our lives." "Yes, indeed we must," said my husband, "but just see what is happening here." A couple of peasant women had stopped and were turning over the dresses on his arm with some expressions of approval. "Well, they evidently think we've got good taste," he said complacently. But they began to name a sum, first in Serbian, and then, as we made no response, in Greek and in Vlach; and Constantine, who was still glowing with happiness over the business of the white horse, now became happier still. "They think that you are carrying those dresses over your arm because you are trying to sell them," he cried joyfully. "Do you see, they cannot conceive a state of affairs in which a husband would carry anything for his wife, and the only people they know who wear Western clothes and concern themselves at all with peasant things are shopkeepers, and so

they do not realise at all that you are English and very grand, no, not at all." "My dear," said my husband, "it is not twelve o'clock in the day and we have already been mistaken for itinerant moneylenders and second-hand clothes dealers. But I think that the curious statement you made about all your friends having been deported will do us the most harm in the end. Who in the world will they think we are? Mr. and Mrs. Al Capone *en vacances*? But doubtless Bitolj will turn it all to favour and to prettiness."

### ROAD

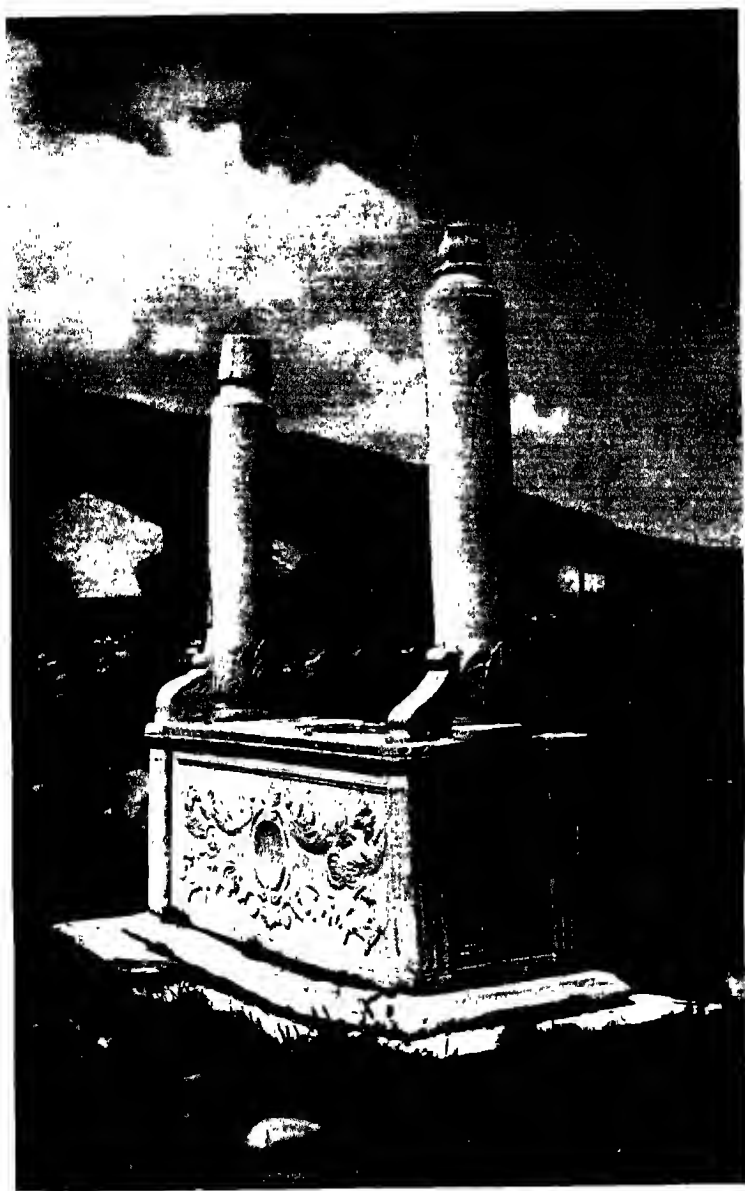
Sometimes a country will for days keep its secrets from a traveller, showing him nothing but its surfaces, its grass, its trecs, the outside of its houses. Then suddenly it will throw him a key and tell him to go where he likes and see what he can. That afternoon and evening Macedonia passed into such a confidential mood regarding her Serbs and Bulgars. Our instruction began while Constantine was seeing Gerda off to Skoplje by the one o'clock train; she was to stay there another night, and then return to Belgrade. We spent this last half-hour in a café that lies among thick acacia woods in a little hill a mile or so outside the town. It was a holiday and there were many young students from the gymnasium (which is here what the English call a secondary and Americans a high school) sitting about in the darkness cast by the dense white flowers, some of them strumming on guslas. Presently one of them saw that my husband had dropped his matchbox and came to pick it up. "Are you Germans?" he asked. "No, but I speak German," answered my husband. "You are doing business here, or travelling for pleasure?" the boy went on. "For pleasure. My wife came here a year ago, and she liked it so much that she insisted on bringing me here."

The boy nodded gravely, "Without doubt Macedonia is the most beautiful place in the world. But of course tourists are very rare here, because the Government does nothing to bring them. All, all goes for Dalmatia, the Government spends all its money there and has none for us. Look at the huge hotels they have there, and what we have here." "The ones here are quite good enough for us," said my husband, "but in any case I don't think Macedonia can ever compete

work for Bulgaria. When she was a young girl and life was very dangerous, she went to Struga." She had, in fact, been the opposite number to the yellow-haired woman we had seen in Ochrid who had shown us her chickens ; and I am sure that she was equally heroic, for this boy, though at present a Juggins, had the makings of a superb creature. "How are you going to Skoplje ?" asked the boy. "By Veles ? Ah, how I wish I could go with you, for in Veles there lives —, a lawyer who is a great Bulgarian patriot. We read of him in the Serbian newspapers, which attack him shamefully. Later we will go to see him, though no doubt the police will persecute us afterwards. Well, good-bye, I am much obliged to you for our conversation. I always like to improve myself by talking with men and women of the world."

We drove out of Bitolj through plains covered with flowers, with clover and buttercups and tall daisies, and a kind of meadow-sweet slimmer than ours, past a brown pool full of buffaloes lying like pieces of meat in a stew, and were met by death on one of its most idiotic missions. The dogs of Macedonia are for the most part a handsome and heroic breed, reared to be ferocious for very good reasons. In the days of brigandage they had to protect their masters' crops and herds by day, and at night warn the household of raiders. They see so few automobiles that they never learn what they are, and see them as animals of a rare and formidable sort which have to be headed off their master's property like any others. On the way to Prilep a heavy white dog, thickly furred as a chow, held firm to this mistaken notion of our nature and ran by us barking with a most likable gallantry. A hole in the road sent us swerving towards the field it guarded, and it fulfilled its duty as it saw it. It went for the automobile's bonnet as for the head of a hostile animal. We saw its white body fly through the air and fall among the standing corn, a good twenty yards away. It was a mere stupid lump when it flew through the air, it dropped as if it had never lived. One could not help but weep. "So must many Serbs have died who thought they must attack the Bulgars," said my husband, "so must many Bulgars who thought they must attack the Serbs."

Prilep lay on the plains before us, under a range of hills castellated with outcrops of rock ; before we could enter it we drew to the side of the road to let pass a train of shaggy fierce-



TOMB IN MOSLEM GRAVEYARD AT BITOLJ



PRINCE MARKO'S MONASTERY AT PRILEP

eyed nomads, hurrying along on heavily laden pack-horses on their way up to the chalets on Kaimakshalan for the summer's cheese-making. When we were crossing the market-place of Prilep, which is an agreeable country town struggling with heat and dust, we heard someone calling Constantine's name, and saw a man in a tight black suit running towards us. "Get in, my friend," said Constantine, "I am taking these English to the monastery of Prince Marko, and I will drop you here on our way back." He appeared to be a Serbian official in charge of the education of the town, and he was stuffed fuller with grievances than any human being I have ever seen. As soon as he sat down beside Constantine a jet of complaint burst from him, not a weak little whining trickle but a great spout, sent out under heavy pressure, worthy of the principal fountain in a public park. "He isn't letting up at all," said my husband, "and in a minute he will cry. What on earth is the matter with him?" "He talks of some difficulty in administration," said Constantine hastily and without candour. The poor man was still at it when we left the car and walked up a steep incline towards Prince Marko's monastery, and my husband said, "I wish I knew what was worrying him, he's got such a nice, pig-headed, earnest face." "He certainly is carrying on," I said, "and at such a rate that Constantine has not been able to get in a word edgeways for some minutes. Is this a record?" "But, good Lord, do you know what he is saying?" asked my husband. "Listen! Listen! it is most extraordinary." The man in tight black clothes had stopped on the edge of the platform in front of the church, and was jumping up and down in front of an immense and burning panorama of plains and mountains and sky, and looking far hotter than any of them, and shaking his fist at some absent object of his hatred. "Yes," I said, "it is perfectly true; he appears to be saying, 'Lord Buxton! Lord Buxton!'" Now I know what it is. Lord Buxton is a pro-Bulgarian, and this poor man is a Serbian official who is complaining that the Bulgarians here do not appreciate his ministrations, and that they are encouraged in insubordination by such foreign sympathisers."

My husband polished his glasses and looked again at the man in tight black clothes. "How absurd this is," he said, "because this is just the kind of man a Buxton would like, a good and noble prig." I rushed Constantine's defences by



saying, "What have the Bulgarians been doing to your friend, and how does Lord Buxton come into it?" He squeaked back, "Lord Buxton came here, with a secretary who like himself was very foolish, and they come only to see what Bulgaria tells them to see and never to see what Yugoslavia is doing here, which as you know is well and very well, and he cannot think why men who are English as Mr. Gladstone was should be on the side of movements that are financed by the Italians and that devil Mussolini, and they say we are very harsh against them, and it is no wonder if we were at one time, for they were bad with us, and they put us in danger and we had many things to do, and now how is it when he cannot punish youths for spitting in the class-room without them telling him they will call on Lord Buxton." "How surprised our essentially Liberal Lord Buxton would be to find himself considered as an ally of Fascism and a bulwark of the spitting habit," said my husband. "And how certain it is that all this man says is true! It has the muddled and disappointing quality of life." At this point the man in tight black clothes recalled our presence and was seized by the memory of something that he ought to do. He pointed at an archway and called out a few passionate words to Constantine, keeping his eyes on us the while. "My friend wishes you to notice," said Constantine, "how the Bulgarians painted the Bulgarian colours on this archway during the war, though this is the monastery of Prince Marko, and it is certainly a Serbian monument. Also he wished me to show you how they defaced certain Serbian frescoes and inscriptions." "Good God," said my husband, "it is as if we went on chewing over the Wars of the Roses. But I suppose we might if we had been enslaved since and now had to start afresh. Still, that makes it no less of a bore."

That is very true of all disputes between the Serbs and the Bulgars that are based on historical grounds. Both parties, and this applies not to old professors but to the man in the street, start with the preposterous idea that when the Turks were driven out of the Balkans the frontiers recognised when they came in should be re-established, in spite of the lapse of five centuries, and then they are not loyal to it. The frontiers demanded by the extremists on both sides are those which their peoples touched only at the moments of their greatest expansion, and they had to be withdrawn afterwards because they could

not be properly defended. The ideal Bulgaria which the Bulgarians lust for, and nearly obtained through the Russian-drafted Treaty of San Stefano in 1878, actually existed only during the lifetimes of the Tsar Simeon who died in the tenth century, and of the Tsar Samuel, who died about a hundred years later. The Serbs are as irritating when they regard their Tsar Dushan not only as an inspiration but as a map-maker, for his empire had fallen to pieces in the thirty-five years between his death and the defeat at Kossovo. The only considerations which should determine the drawing of Balkan frontiers are the rights of the peoples to self-government and the modifications of that right to which they must submit in order to keep the peninsula as a whole free from the banditry of the great powers. But the historical approach gratifies the pedantic side of the Slav, and so it has never been abandoned.

I forgot the man in tight black clothes in another matter of antiquity at that moment, for the Abbot and two monks had come out of the monastery to greet us. The Abbot, who was a Serbian of the best type of pioneer who comes down to Macedonia to work in the church or medicine or education, greeted us with great warmth, not so much for our own sakes, I think, as because we were not the two monks. These were Russians, and they exhibited to an intense degree that detachment from their surroundings which is characteristic of the White exiles in Yugoslavia, and which has always struck me as unpleasing, except in the case of the little monk from Finland at Neresi. They are certainly unworldly, but only because of a superficiality so extreme that it cannot lay hold even of the surface of things. They had an air of being here only because they had missed all the trains in the world. The Abbot took us up into the gallery used for the entertainment of guests and gave us *slatko*, and immediately I was faced with an object which solved a riddle that had been vexing me for some time. The riddle lay in the character of Prince Marko, the Serbian hero who is the subject of many folk-songs. He was a real personage, the son of a fourteenth-century Serbian king and himself Prince of Prilep, but he is also a legend, a symbol of the extrovert, and therefore dear to a people that swings back and forth between extroversion and introversion, and knows quite well which is the pleasanter extreme. He was prodigiously strong, he carried for weapon a mace weighing sixty pounds of iron, thirty pounds

of silver and nine pounds of gold. His horse, Piebald, was the *fleetest in the world and understood the human tongue*; and from one side of its saddle swung the mace and from the other a counterweight of red wine in a skin, for Marko was a hard drinker though he was never drunk. He was a great fighter and chivalrous. When he killed Moossa Arbanassa, the Albanian rebel, he wept and said, "Alas, alas to me, may the gracious God forgive me that I killed a far better knight than I am," and took the severed head and rode back with it to Constantinople and flung it at the feet of the Sultan. When the Sultan started back in alarm Marko cried, "Since you sprang away from Moossa's head now he is dead, I wonder what you would have done if you had met him when he was alive?"

It must be noted that it was for the Sultan that Marko killed Moossa Arbanassa. That is a reflection of the historical truth. Marko was defeated by the Turks and though he kept his principedom of Prilep it was as the Sultan's vassal; and he was obliged to fight against the Christians. This he did not take robustly, but, it appears, sadly and scrupulously. It is told of him that before the battle of Rovine in Roumania in 1399, he said, "I pray God to give the victory to the Christians, even if I have to pay for it with my own blood". And that prayer was answered. Yet it is told of him with equal conviction that one morning he was riding along a road when Piebald stumbled and shed tears; and when he wondered at this portent a fairy who was his adopted sister announced to him that as he was now three hundred years old he must die. So he killed Piebald, for the horse had been his for a hundred and sixty years, and they could not well be parted now, and gave him a fine funeral. Then he threw his mace over the mountains to the sea, shouting, "When that mace comes up from the sea then such a one as I am may again appear on earth", and lying down on the green grass, gave himself to the most cheerful death recorded in literature.

The discrepancy between these two accounts of his death is paralleled in various accounts of his life. It is not as if the one version were written by somebody who stuck to the facts and the other by somebody who either did not know the facts or preferred to use fantasy and was determined to make a story of it, but as if they were written about two different people quite unlike in character. One ballad represents him as drawing on himself

his father's curse by refusing to bear false witness and support *his claim that the Tsar Stephen Dushan had left him his empire. Another represents him as a captive in pagan hands, gaining his freedom by promising to marry the daughter of the Saracen prince who holds him, on condition that she steals her father's keys and lets him out. But once they are on their way to Christian lands he realises he cannot keep his promise, she is too black, too queer, too outlandish, and he kills her. "Too bad," he says, with a little sincerity, but with confidence in his power of forgetfulness. One of the two personalities disclosed in these poems has a sensitive conscience. The other has none.*

In the gallery I saw, built into the wall, a carving representing a round and jolly rogue, stark naked, riding a very large horse. "Where does that come from?" I asked. The Abbot said, "It was part of the original church here, which was built just before the time of Prince Marko, and was pulled down in the eighteenth century to make room for the one that is standing now, and they put it in this building, which was built about the same time. But I am told that we should not have it here, for the little man was a god who was worshipped here in pre-Christian times." And so it was. It was the Thracian Rider, a deity worshipped all over ancient Thrace and Macedonia, whom some think to be a form of Rhesus, the hero of whom Homer wrote. He had a long lease of life, for the Roman legionaries of Thracian origin went on worshipping him, and his shrines are found wherever the legions went, and in Rome itself. You may find several sculptures representing him in the Budapest Museum. The mystery of Prince Marko was solved. There had been two similar processes and a synthesis of the results. The cult of the Thracian Rider was practised in Prilep, and was driven underground by Christianity; but it never left the hearts of the people, who in this uncomfortable life liked to think of a comfortable immortal, happy as eternity is long, unacquainted with pain. Even so, when Prince Marko was lowered from power to vassalhood he too never left the hearts of the people, who under the yoke of the Turk liked to think of the milder yoke of this reflective Christian prince. Therefore the two became fused in the common mind, the happy god, the sad mortal, and the imagination of folk-song followed now one strain and now another in this entanglement of opposites.

When we went down the hillside, the man in tight black

clothes running before us to show us a cliff where the Bulgarians had defaced a fresco portraying a Serbian king, we saw below us Dragutin standing by the car in an attitude of deep depression. "He is in bad humour," said Constantine, "we will find that he has been worsted in some conflict with an animal." And when we got to him he mournfully told us that he had seen a very big snake among the stones and had let it get away. He did not recover his spirits till our road took us to a mountain called Babuna, covered with low beechwoods which for time out of mind had sheltered rebels. Here the first Bogomils, the Manichæan heretics, had taken refuge, establishing themselves for so long that they gave the place its name; for they were then called Babuni; and here the haiduks and the comitadji had hidden, all through the Turkish occupation. "Rebels gave this place its name," said Constantine, "and it gave its name to one of our greatest rebels. For all our Serbian comitadji, who worked for the liberation of Macedonia, took false names, lest some time their kinsmen should have to pass through Turkish territory; and the most gifted of them, who sheltered among these woods for much of his life, called himself Babunsky." Dragutin gave out a round-mouthed roar of homage as he heard the name.

About us Macedonia changed into what I think is its highest state of beauty, though many travellers call it dreary. It is certainly bare, merely stippled with trees in the valleys, and veined rarely by rivers; but it is superbly sculptured. In passing through it one receives a very pure apprehension of majestic form. Sometimes we passed fields of opium poppies, with their cool, large, positive beauty, their fleshy green leaves and stalks, their pure white and austere purple flowers; and sometimes mosaics of water, divided by *fine* lines of mud, and just pierced with the sharpest, highest, most vibrant green imaginable, an F-sharp-in-alt green. Dragutin shook his fist at them. "It is rice," said Constantine; "the Government wants to stop it, for it causes terrible malaria, but we cannot, for the people are terribly poor, and rice pays them better than anything else." In the late afternoon we came to what is the second greatest pleasure I have ever derived from the nose. The greatest is to be enjoyed driving through the Midi in the dark at the time of the vintage, when farmers have laid the pressed wine-skins as manure on the fields outside the town, and there rises through

the warm night an aether of drunkenness, potent yet delicate, winier than any wine. Here in Macedonia I learned that honey is not so successful as one believes, that no bee ever realises its full intention, and that the perfumer is a clumsy bungler who never cracks the fragile crib he covets, by approaching a town built in the Turkish manner, with a multitude of little gardens, at a time when the sun had been working for many hours on the acacia trees. The air was more than scented, it was flavoured, it was dense with the essence of flowers.

It was Veles that we were approaching, a town that a great many people admire on their way to Athens: its elegant dilapidated Turkish houses, painted in refined colours, hang on each side of a rocky gorge cleft by the rushing Vardar. We racketed through the narrow streets to the heights of the town, inconveniencing the inhabitants not so much as might be expected, for it seemed to them that we were doing something very dashing and courageous, and they smiled at us as if we were swashbuckling cavaliers. We came to a great church that stood on the hillside, so high that it enjoyed the day while the evening clouded the town beneath, among lawns and stone terraces and giant planes, abundantly watered by the stream from a fountain. It had the same strange aspect as the Cathedral at Skoplje, of forms handled with competence but without comprehension, and indeed it had been built by the same four brothers. There was an Italian Gothic apse which revealed their command over their craft and their ignorance of it. They had copied it from buildings they had seen when they were working in Italy as stone-masons, but as they knew nothing of the forms that lay between it and its remotest ancestry they had missed its essential quality. Its handsomeness looked blind. Inside it was full of profounder incongruities, admitting elements that were discordant not only from the point of view of architecture but as matters of religion and culture. Here too the pulpit was like a mimbar in a mosque, the preacher climbed extremely steep steps and spoke to the congregation from high under the rafters; and there were immensely broad galleries, completely Islamic in tone, in which there were separate chapels for the women, and great tables and benches set aside for social occasions. The proportions of the place were wildly wrong. The architect had believed that if a church was built unusually high in proportion to its base it would look majestic instead of

leggy. But the error was magnificent, and the handling of its stone, particularly the marble, made comprehensible the terror the Turks felt before of the Slav subjects, the terror that made them never rest in their efforts to geld them by famine and massacre.

Two priests came to us over the green lawns through the golden afternoon, clean and handsome men. One said, "We are so glad you have come to see our church, nobody visits it, and surely it is very beautiful. It looks very rich, as rich as the church at Bitolj; but Veles was never rich like Bitolj, it was only that all the Christians in the town gave what they could, and all the Christians in the villages around for many miles." And the other said, "Is it not wonderful that the Turks thought they were insulting us when they made our fathers build their church outside the town, and that it meant that we have the most beautiful site in Veles, and that all the mosques are below our feet?" "Sit down on the bench," said the other, "and I will bring you slatko, for here in this fountain we have the most beautiful water, cold and lively as a living thing." They sat beside us while we drank, and said, "And we have a precious grave here. Have you seen it? There it is, the white marble one by the cobbles. It is only to see that grave that people come here on week-days, and often they turn back without seeing our church. But still we are very pleased they should come and reverence that sacred stone." "Who lies there?" "Babunsky the comitadji," said the priest.

"Babunsky!" breathed Constantine. As we followed him down the cobbles we passed Dragutin who was standing by the fountain, communing with his water-god. "Did you know Babunsky was buried here?" Constantine asked him. "Was I not at his funeral?" answered Dragutin. We all stood before the headstone on which it was written that beneath it lay Yovan Babunsky, 1878-1920. "But I saw him not long before he died," said Constantine, "and he looked far older than that." "So he did," said the older of the two priests. "I knew him well when I was young, and what you say is true. But who could wonder? How many nights of his life did he sleep in a bed? How many days did he eat no food but the berries from the bushes? And he was wounded many times, and often fell sick with fear. All this our Serbian brother did for our sake, that Macedonia should be free."

In Veles our automobile developed a fault, and Dragutin had to tinker with its innards for half an hour or so. Constantine fell asleep in the back seat, and my husband and I strolled through the dusk about the town, which was just coming to life again after the heat of the day, not to work, but to stretch itself and enjoy the full knowledge that soon it would sleep again. We lingered before some little shops, tiny caves of flimsy woodwork, with their minute stocks, that amounted to perhaps a hundred jugs, or twenty rolls of cloth, or a few basins of yoghurt and rice porridge. We turned a corner into a street where the shops were larger and more Western in their merchandise. I noticed that several of them were not shops at all, but lawyers' offices. Here there was a chemist, there a lawyer, here a draper. "How amusing it would be if we found Charles Russell or Sir William Jowitt in between Heppell's and the Burma Ruby Company in the Strand," I said; and we stood for a moment watching one of these lawyers seeing a client to the door of his shop, at first out of curiosity, and then out of friendliness, for the lawyer was a finely made man, with an air of noble destiny about him. He would always be over-apprehensive, but only about others, for himself he would show a gentle, stately carelessness. When he had been left alone he remained standing at his threshold for a little, looking out in the darkness, as if he knew that in the end it must take all, but showing only the faintest melancholy.

As he closed the glass door I looked at the name on his sign; and I clutched my husband's sleeve. "Look! look!" I said. "This is the lawyer of Veles whom the schoolboy in Bitolj told us was such a Bulgarian patriot! Let us go and talk to him and find out what the situation really is, for he is sure to speak French or German, and it would be most interesting, for I believe this is a centre of Bulgarian agitation." When we went into the office the lawyer looked up with unhurried vigilance and dismissed a servant who was in the room, telling her to bring us black coffee. As soon as she had gone, my husband explained why we had come. "The boy said you had done great things for the Bulgarian cause," he ended, "and said that he and his friends hoped to come and see you." The lawyer smiled. "He was a good boy, I expect," he said, "full of courage, full of heart." "Yes," we said. "I could weep at what you have told me," he said. He spoke a slow, old-



fashioned French that was a very suitable medium for his gentle and precise personality. "Yes, I could weep. For you see, I am not a Bulgarian patriot. I am not even a Bulgarian. I can be quite sure about that, for when I was a child I saw my father, who was a Serbian schoolmaster in a village between here and Prilep, murdered by Bulgarians because he was not of their blood."

He made an anxious deprecating gesture. "But I try to remember that only as a grief and not as a wrong, for I should be a great fool if I did not admit that had he been a Bulgarian schoolmaster it might easily have happened that he was murdered by the Serbs. But there is another reason why I try to think of my father as having died, and not as having been killed. I believe it is time we stopped thinking of such little things as whether we are Serbs or Bulgars. I believe we should rather realise with a new seriousness that we are all human beings and that every human being needs freedom and justice as much as he needs air to breathe and food to eat. In fact, I am an opponent of the present Yugoslav Government. I am not at all the friend of Monsieur Stoyadinovitch. And that is how the confusion that has brought you to me has arisen. For the official press, in an effort to discredit me, has started a legend that I am a Bulgarian who is working against Serbian interests. There could not be a blacker lie." I gaped, seeing at work the same process that had united Prince Marko and Rhesus. "But do not be distressed," he said kindly. "I shall think more kindly of the lie now it has given me the pleasure of your visit. Will you take some Turkish delight with your coffee?"

### *Skoplje*

It did not seem possible that Gerda had said good-bye to us. That, literally, was all she had said. She had extended her hand and had uttered the single word "Good-bye", its starkness unpalliated by any acknowledgment that she had been our guest for a fortnight. It seemed to me that she might have said something, for she had had great fun at dinner the night before, being rude to me with a peculiar virtuosity, using pettiness as if it were a mighty club. While Constantine saw her off on the Belgrade train we sat outside the hotel and drank iced beer, and

felt weak but contented, like fever patients whose temperature has at last fallen. My husband bought some guelder roses from an Albanian, laid them on the table, contemplated them for some moments and said :

"Gerda has no sense of process. That is what is the matter with Gerda. She wants the result without doing any of the work that goes to make it. She wants to enjoy the position of a wife without going to the trouble of making a real marriage, without admiring her husband for his good qualities, without practising loyal discretion regarding his bad qualities, without respecting those of his gods which are not hers. She wants to enjoy motherhood without taking care of her children, without training them in good manners or giving them a calm atmosphere. She wants to be our friend, to be so close to us in friendship that we will ask her to travel about the country with us, but she does not make the slightest effort to like us, or even to conceal that she dislikes us. She is angry when you are paid such little respect as comes your way because you are a well-known writer, she feels it ought to come to her also, though she has never written any books. She is angry because we have some money. She feels that it might just as well belong to her. That our possession of this money has something to do with my work in the City and my family's work in Burmah never occurs to her. For her the money might as easily have been attached to her as to us by a movement as simple as that which pastes a label on a trunk. As she has no sense of what goes to bring people love, or friendship, or distinction or wealth, it seems to her that the whole world is enjoying undeserved benefits ; and in a universe where all is arbitrary it might just as well happen that the injustice was pushed a little further and that all these benefits were taken from other people, leaving them nothing, and transferred to her, giving her everything. Given the premise that the universe is purely arbitrary, that there is no causality at work anywhere, there is nothing absurd in that proposal.

"This is the conqueror's point of view. It was the Turk's point of view in all their aggressive periods. Everybody who is not Gerda is to Gerda 'a dog of an infidel', to be treated without mercy. If she could get hold of our money by killing us, and would not be punished for it, I think she would do it, not out of cruelty, but out of blankness. Since she denies the

reality of process, she would only envisage our death, which would be a great convenience to her, and not our dying, which would be a great inconvenience to us. She has shut herself off from the possibility of feeling mercy, since pain is a process and not a result. This will give her a great advantage in any conflict with more sensitive people, and indeed it is not her only advantage. Her nature gives her a firm foundation for her life that many a better woman lacks. Constantine is not less but more devoted as a husband because she is a bad wife to him. All his humility says, 'If she thinks so little of me, is there perhaps some lack in me?' All his affection says, 'Since she is so desperately hungry, what can I give her?' And, needless to say, her children are devoted to her. It is the impulse of children to do whatever their parents do not. If their parents bend to them, they turn away; if their parents turn away, they bend to them.

"In her wider relationships also she is very happy. To begin with, nobody who is not like Gerda can believe how bad Gerda is. We did not, at the beginning; and if we told people the story of what Gerda has been to us on this trip in anything like the concentrated terms in which one usually tells a story we would see a doubt pass over their faces. 'They must have been tactless with her,' 'They cannot have made her properly welcome,' is what they would think to themselves. That she invited herself to be our guest and then continuously insulted us is not a proposition acceptable to the mind, which rightly sees that there is no hope for humanity if it can bring itself to behave like that. If we established the truth of our story they would grasp at excuses for her, could plead that she was an alien in a strange land, that her experiences as a young girl in the war had made her neurotic, that she had been given an inferiority complex by the Treaty of Versailles.

"These things may be true; but it is also true that to recognise them is dangerous. It weakens the resistance that should be made against Gerda. For there is no way to be safe from her except to treat her as if she were, finally and exclusively, a threat to existence. Look how she has defeated us. You love Macedonia more than any other country you have ever visited. Sveti Naum is to you a place apart; you wanted to take me there. We have made that journey. We have made it in the company of an enemy who tormented us not only by her

atrocious behaviour to us but by behaving atrociously to other people whom we liked when she was with us. This has clouded our vision of the country, it has angered us and weakened us. When Constantine said to us, 'My wife wishes to come to Macedonia with us,' we should not merely have said, 'We do not think that will be a success, we would rather she did not come,' we should have said, 'We dislike your wife extremely, we dislike the way she speaks against you and Yugoslavia, we will not travel with her, and if she turns up at the train we will take our luggage out of it.' But we could not. We did not believe that she could go on being as bad as she had been; we were sorry for her because she was a German who loved her country and had committed herself to living in the Balkans; we have been elaborately trained from our infancy not to express frankly our detestation of others. So she got what she wanted, and she is still getting what she wanted. Do not think she is going to Belgrade because we did not want her to go to Petch: she is going, quite simply, because she thinks it would be more pleasant to go back to her children.

"Gerda, in fact, is irresistible. It is therefore of enormous importance to calculate how many Gerdas there are in the world, and whether they are likely to combine for any purpose. Gerda is, of course, not characteristically German. Think of Gustav and Georg and Brigitte and the —s! They could not, to save their lives, behave as she has done. But you can, perhaps, think of some English people who are like her." "There was a gymnastic teacher at my school who was as insensitive and aggressive as that, and once I went to tea at the home of one of my school friends, and her family seemed to me as bad," I said, "and then I once met some Americans who were like that, and then at home Lady — and Lady — and Mrs. — seem to me much the same, with only a little more skill in dissembling it." "And I know a Jew who belongs to the same order," said my husband. "In fact this type appears anywhere and everywhere, though probably much more densely in some areas than others. It seems to me that it appears wherever people are subject to two conditions. The first condition is that they should have lost sight of the importance of process; that they have forgotten that everything which is not natural is artificial and that artifice is painful and difficult: that they should be able to look at a loaf of bread and not realise that

miracles of endurance and ingenuity had to be performed before the wheat grew, and the mill ground, and the oven baked. This condition can be brought about by several causes: one is successful imperialism, where the conquering people has the loaf built for it from the wheat ear up by its conquered subjects, another is modern machine civilisation, where a small but influential proportion of the population lives in towns in such artificial conditions that a loaf of bread comes to them in a cellophane wrapper with its origins as unvisualised as the begetting and birth of a friend's baby. The other condition is that people should have acquired a terror of losing the results of process, which are all they know about; they must be afraid that everything artificial is going to disappear, and they are going to be thrown back on the natural; they must foresee with a shudder a day when there will be no miraculous loaf born in its virginity of cellophane, and they will have to eat grass.

"Now, these conditions obtained in the case of the Turks when they became nuisances in the Balkan Peninsula. At first their wars were inspired not by fanaticism or greed to enslave foreign populations but by legitimate enough desires for political and commercial security. They became cruel and tyrannous only when they were gluttoned by the conquests of Mohammed the Conqueror and Selim and Suleiman the Magnificent, and when the emergence of Russia and the successful opposition of Central Europe and Venice made them afraid of losing the fruits of those victories. They had never learned the art of prosperity in peace-time, they were not economically productive. Neither, oddly enough, is Germany, in spite of her enormous energy and resources. Gerda is bourgeoisie and town-bred. She is proud because her family are all professional men; it is of importance to her that she cannot bake a loaf, she likes to buy her cakes in a shop. Her theory of her own social value depends on her being able to put down money and buy results of processes without being concerned in the processes themselves. And she is enormously afraid that she will not be able to go on doing this. The war made her afraid; the depression has made her still more afraid. It does not occur to her that what she and her kind must do is to reorganise the process of state life till there is some sort of guarantee of a certain amount of artificial goods for all of us. It does not occur to her that she had better learn to bake bread instead of buy it, for since her social value

depends on her not doing so, she regards this as a sentence of death. Therefore she wants to take results that belong to other people : she wants to bone everybody else's loaf.

"Those conditions apply to too many people all over the world to make me regard Gerda as isolated. She is an international phenomenon. But all the same I think that there may be enough Gerdas concentrated in separate areas to make her in effect a nationalist phenomenon. She probably exists in sufficient numbers in Central Europe to make it an aggressive and, indeed, irresistible power. She was, after all, the determining element in the Austro-Hungarian Empire all through the nineteenth century. The parasite city of Vienna, spoiled by its share of the luxury the Austrian and Hungarian nobles wrung out of their peasantry, and terrified by the signs of economic insecurity, howled all the time to be given other people's loaves. Think how furiously they demanded that they should be given preference over the Czechs in seeking employment, that they should not have to pass such difficult examinations as the Czechs for entrance to the Civil Service. It must have disgusted a proud German like Bismarck, who was an aristocrat, a rounded man who repudiated nothing of life and knew the peasant's role as well as his own, and who was not afraid. But Gerda would have thought the agitation most natural.

"Let us admit it, for a little while, the whole of our world may belong to Gerda. She will snatch it out of hands too well-bred and compassionate and astonished to defend it. What we must remember is that she will not be able to keep it. For her contempt for the process makes her unable to conduct any process. You remember how when we met her on the station at Belgrade she expressed an opinion on the book you held in your hand, *The Healing Ritual*, which was sheer nonsense, because she had not read the book ; she imagined she could judge it by her knowledge of the bare fact of its existence. You saw at Ochrid how she had not the faintest idea of what Communism is and how it is distinguished from Social Democracy, though she was once a Communist herself ; she had obviously never thought of making any effort to find out what was the creed behind the church she had joined simply because it was large and many other people had joined it before her. You can conquer a country on this principle. To go up in an aeroplane and drop bombs is a simple use of an elaborate process

that has already been developed. But you cannot administer a country on this principle. Do you remember what Sir Charles Eliot said in his book, *Turkey in Europe*, about the peculiar hollowness of the Ottoman Empire? Here was this great entity acquired by Turkish military genius in its full force and retained by its remnants, and within it no process of any degree of complication or difficulty. In warfare they had the advantage of what Eliot calls 'that special instinct for discipline and order which has unfortunately nothing to do with good government, but surely makes every man render implicit obedience to his military or official superior.' The rest of life they faced with such a blank ignorance of what was needed to secure productiveness and continuity that they were quite contented with their failure. They did not know how to live a comfortable life in their houses: they never learned to protect themselves against the rigour of winter. They liked the country and agricultural life, but they would only work land so far that it hardly needed to be worked. Their commerce and financing and administration had to be done by foreigners; many of their generals and admirals were Italians and Poles and other European renegades; and many of the most capable Grand Viziers were Arabs or Albanians or Slavs. They never developed any economic programme other than the confiscation of money from their subjects without repayment. Nor did the Turks ever feel that the nations who could work land and handle business and husband the resources of their countries were using logical means to obtain desirable ends. What is it Eliot says? 'The Turk regards them as conjurors who can perform a variety of tricks, which may be, according to circumstances, useful, amusing, or dangerous; but for all Christendom he has a brutal, unreasoning contempt — the contempt of the sword for everything that can be cut.'

"I think we can very easily imagine a state engendered by Gerda falling into such an attitude. The problem is how long the part of the world conquered by Gerda's state will bear with its inefficiency. That inefficiency, mind you, is not a mere prediction of mine. It has already appeared. Consider the disastrous history of Austrian and German banking since the war, which is not to be explained by anything except the sheer inability of bankers of Gerda's kind to realise that banking is a process in which due regard has to be paid all the time to the

laws of causality. True, the Ottoman Empire was able to survive in spite of its inefficiency more than five hundred years after it came to Europe. But it had certain advantages Gerda's Empire will not have. It had Islam behind it, a religion that was already seven hundred years old, a religion that had not only justified but was identified with militarism. Now Gerda cannot use Christianity to unify her peoples, because it is in essence against aggression and on the side of mercy ; she may invent a new religion of a pagan kind, but she won't be able to get it into the blood of the people in time. Young men may rush into battle shouting the names of gods who have been run up on a sewing machine the night before last, but such gods will not comfort those who mourn the young men when the battle goes ill.

"The Turks also had the advantage of facing the Slavs, a people who had only known order or peace or unity intermittently during three centuries and whose religion, unlike Islam, divided rather than united its followers, first by the separation of the Western and the Eastern Churches, and secondly by the exploitation of sectarian differences by the Great Powers. Gerda will not have that advantage either. To-day everybody in Europe knows at first hand or at good second hand of the blessings brought by peace and order, and nearly all of them realise that unity is at least a useful instrument, and, if Protestantism has done much harm by making religion identical with ethical effort of a limited kind, it has done a great deal of good by putting down in black and white the ideas of Christianity, and showing us what life will lose if we abandon them. Remember it will not be to anybody's advantage to keep Gerda's Empire in existence. Turkey in Europe was an advantage to England who wanted a weak power at that end of the Mediterranean to keep out any strong power that might have inconvenient ambitions ; it held back the Austrian Empire on its way to the Black Sea, and the Russian Empire from its Pan-Slavist dream and its itch for Constantinople. But Gerda's Empire will serve no such purpose. It will be an object of fear and nothing else.

"For this reason I believe that Gerda's Empire cannot last long. But while it lasts it will be terrible. And what it leaves when it passes will also be terrible. For we cannot hope for anything but a succession of struggles for leadership among men whose minds will have been unfitted for leadership by the



existence of tyranny and the rupture of European tradition, until, slowly and painfully the nations re-emerge, civilisation re-emerges. No wonder that when you came to Macedonia you were fascinated. You were looking in the magic crystal and seeing our future. Oh, I do not wish to exaggerate. It is possible that the full tragedy of Gerda's assault on those who are not Gerda will not be fully enacted, that only seventy or sixty or fifty per cent of the potential evils of the situation will be realised. But the Turks are here, for Gerda is here, and Europe is in her soul Macedonia. If Europeans have not the virtues of the Macedonian peasant, our life is lost, and we are the greenfly on the rose tree that has been torn up and thrown on the rubbish-heap. All that we are and do means nothing, all that our ancestors were and did means nothing, unless we are naturally the equals of the peasant women on the Skopska Tserna Gora and in Bitolj, whose fingers never forget the pattern that an ancient culture had created as symbols for what it had discovered regarding life and death."

My husband said these things while we drank our beer, while we took a little walk by the embankment and watched the carters take their horses into mid-stream of the lowered river, while we lunched off paprika stew and yoghurt, and later, in our bedroom, while I sat by the window and mended the clothes that had just been brought back to us by a gipsy laundress dressed in saffron and ultramarine. We were resting because to-morrow was St. George's Day, and that evening we were motoring out with some Serbian friends of ours, a Bosnian Moslem and his wife, a Serbian from Novi Sad, Mehmed and Militsa, to see some of the rites that are carried on in the villages during the eve of the festival. They are all fertility rites, magic remedies against the curse of barrenness that lies on Macedonia, partly because of the malaria and partly because of the overwork of the women and the lack of care for child-bearing women. Constantine was not going with us, for he had to dine with a Government official in the town. We had not the least idea what the night was going to be like ; it hung before us like a dark blue curtain which, we knew, would disclose a beautiful pattern when we came to examine it. I was vaguely displeased by what my husband said ; I complained, "I cannot bear this, it sounds as if I would die before things are tidied up." My husband said, "But certainly you will die

before things are tidied up! You must realise that or you are bound to become unhappy and embittered." "It is, of course, not of the slightest importance that we should have the satisfaction of seeing the world at rights before we die," I murmured, feeling about in the work-basket for the darker beige darning silk, and then I burst out laughing, because I knew that for all we were saying there lived in both our hearts a bright idiot hope, "In five years it will be all right. . . . Well, in ten years then . . ."

There was a tap at the door and Constantine came into the room. He looked tired but liberated. "The chambermaid," he said, looking down the passage, "is of the Gretchen type. But how different would *Faust* have been if the Gretchen Faust and Mephistopheles met at the well had been an experienced chambermaid." "Well, that is probably what the play needs," I said, for I love to torment Constantine about Goethe, "for God knows Nietzsche was right when he said it was a thin and empty little story." "Here is a telegram for your poor husband," said Constantine, sitting down. "The chambermaid is not unlike a *petite femme* in Paris who played a great part in the lives of us Serb students in Paris just before the war. She was called Blanche la Vache and we found her enormously sympathetic. It was to her, I remember, that we owed enlightenment on a matter that had greatly perplexed us. How was it, we wondered, when we went to the *petites femmes* they always knew at once that we were not German, we were not Swiss, we were not Italians, we were not Russians, but quite simply Serbs? So at a favourable moment I put the question to Blanche la Vache and she answered me at once, like a good honest girl. 'It is because,' she said, 'you have the pants that fasten not with buttons but with a cord, like the pyjamas, and all women know that it is only in the Balkans that such are worn.' So I ran back to my comrades and told them, and then what a waste there was! For we rushed out and bought new pants of the European fashion, and threw away those we had brought from home, and of course our good Serbian mothers had sent us to Paris with a dozen of everything." "Alas, my dear," said my husband, "this is a telegram from Berlin telling me to expect a telephone call this evening. I shall not be able to go with you and Militsa and Mehmed to-night. What a pity! But I will go and have tea with them and see you off.

Not for anything would I miss seeing Militsa and Mehmed."

I did not doubt that he was disappointed, for these friends of ours are at once intoxicating and reassuring. Once I showed Denis Saurat, who is one of the wisest of men, a letter I had received from Militsa. "She writes from Skoplje, I see," he said. "Really, we are all much safer than we suppose. If there are twenty people like this woman scattered between here and China, civilisation will not perish." Militsa was born in Novi Sad when it was Hungarian: that is to say, she is a descendant of one of the thirty-seven thousand families who were led into Austrian territory by the Patriarch Arsenius in 1690 because they could no longer support the tyranny of the Turk. Her father was a dashing figure of the nineteenth century, who had studied medicine in Vienna and became the star of a students' corps, was later an officer in the Russian Army, and ended as a famous man of letters who translated *Faust* into Serbian. Militsa takes in person after his mother who was a Greek, probably of the true and ancient stock, for she has the same fine and small-boned good looks as some people I have known who were of unquestioned descent from Byzantine families, and she inherited her father's intellectual powers. From her childhood she has known Serbian, German, Hungarian, Latin and Greek, and later she learned English, French and Italian. She has studied profoundly the literatures of all these languages; I have rarely met anyone, English or American, who was better acquainted with the English poets. She has taken her doctorate in philosophy, has written much on Plato, and is now tracing the influence of the Kabalists on the Bishop-King Peter II of Montenegro, who was a great mystic poet. She herself writes poetry, in which her exquisite sensitiveness explores the whole universe in obedience to the instructions of her ambitious intellect. She talks with the brilliance of a firefly, but her flight is not wandering, it is a swift passage from one logically determined point to another. And besides these things she is what other women spend all their lives in being. She inherits the medieval tradition of housewifery which persisted very strongly among the Serbs of Novi Sad; and she is a devoted daughter to her widowed mother, and a loving wife to Mehmed.

Mehmed is a Herzegovinian Moslem, a descendant of one of the Slav landowners who became Moslem in the sixteenth

century rather than abandon the Bogomil heresy. His father was an imam, a Moslem priest, and he was very pious when he was a boy. It was his ambition then to win the title of Hafiz, which is given to a man who knows the Koran by heart, but he had only mastered half of it when he was caught up into the tide of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian nationalist movement. He was the leading spirit in the Mostar counterpart of the revolutionary cell in Sarajevo to which Princip belonged. For a summer he worked as a comitadji in Macedonia, and later joined the Serbian Army during the Balkan wars. After that he went to study law in Vienna and became a leader of the disaffected Slav students of Austrian nationality. At the outbreak of war in 1914 he escaped to Belgrade and fought with the Serbian Army. He was in a position to know how little the Serbian Government had wanted war at that time, for he found himself fighting in battle after battle that would have been a decisive victory had he and his comrades not been hamstrung by lack of munitions. He took part in the retreat through Albania, and in Corfu was invalided out of the army. Still a boy, he had behind him five years of almost continuous military service, irregular and regular. He spent the rest of the war years taking a degree in Oriental studies in the Sorbonne, and is a scholar of Turkish, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. After the peace he returned to Herzegovina, and, without making an effort to protect his own interests, assisted in the land scheme which broke up the big estates belonging to the Moslem landowners and distributed it among the peasants. Through all the intricacies of post-war Yugoslavian politics, in spite of the temptations they have offered to passion and acquisitiveness, he has urged the importance to the state of fundamental virtue, of honest administration, and of justice towards all races and classes. In fact, experiences which should have turned him into a wolf have left him unchangeably mild and inflexibly merciful. He has suffered the shipwreck of his political ambitions during the last years, for under the dictatorship of Stoyadinovitch all such democrats as he have been driven out of politics. But he is still unembittered, laughter is always rolling up from the depths of his full-bodied Bosnian handsomeness.

Militsa and Mehmed have a special value to me not only because of what they are, but because of where they are. Twice I passed through Skoplje before I stopped there. After the

first time I said to some people in Athens, "I saw from the train a place called Skoplje which has a most beautiful fortress. Would it be worth while going there?" They were anti-Slav and answered, "Worth while going to Skoplje? What an idea! It is just a dreary little provincial town; there's nothing there at all, not an intelligent person." So the second time I went through the town, on my way back to Belgrade, I looked out at it and conceived it as full only with emptiness. My eye travelled over its roofs and I thought of dull rooms underneath them, with dull people eating and drinking and sleeping, with only the drabdest connective tissue of being to bind these functions together into a day. And all the time there was the flat on the Vardar embankment, lovely with old furniture brought from Novi Sad that told of the best in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, that spoke of the Vienna of Mozart and Schubert, and there were Militsa and Mehmed, always in motion, yet always steady. Militsa runs from room to room, from the library to the kitchen, from the kitchen to her bedroom, to find out what Shelley said of Chatterton, to see if there are any bubbles rising in the last lot of preserved peaches, to try on a hat she has bought from the Polish milliner in the High Street; Mehmed sits in conference with a group of grave old Moslem priests, so old that the white bands round their fezes have become blue with many years' washing, and after they have said their slow ceremonial farewells he rushes downstairs to the garden to play with his gun-dogs, and is back again in no time to give restraining advice to some university students who have called to tell him about a meditated demonstration against Mr. Stoyadinovitch. Yet these two are steady as pillars. They are pillars supporting that invisible house which we must have to shelter us if we are not to be blown away by the winds of nature. Now, when I go through a town of which I know nothing, a town which appears to be a waste land of uniform streets wholly without quality, I look on it in wonder and hope, since it may hold a Mehmed, a Militsa.

#### ST. GEORGE'S EVE: I

When I arrived at the apartment of Mehmed and Militsa to go with them on a tour round the country to see the various rites that are carried on during St. George's Eve, I found her

receiving a call from two ladies, and while Mehmed and Constantine and my husband talked politics I listened to them discussing a friend of theirs who had roused Skoplje's suspicions by going to Belgrade for a prolonged visit without her husband. "I think indeed that this is just foolish talk," said Militsa. "Yelena has not left her husband for another man, she is always a little discontented because her husband gives her no freedom, and she wants a little time to be alone and enjoy the poetry of life." "That may be so," said one of the ladies, "but if all she wanted was a little time to be alone and enjoy the poetry of life, it seems funny that she went all the way out to Mrs. Popovitch's new house a week before she left to borrow a copy of *Die Dame* that had some pretty nightdresses in it." They soon left and we turned from tea to rakia, and Militsa stood for a time discussing neo-Thomism with my husband in an attitude she often adopts when engaged in intellectual conversation. She stands by the tea-table with her old wolf-hound some feet away, and a glass of rakia in her hand, and every now and then she raises the glass and whips it down so that a lash of liquid flies through the air, and the dog leaps forward and swallows it in mid-air. "We must start," said Mehmed. "That is not the philosophic air I breathe easily," said Militsa, "and religion is for me not there at all. But I have never found it for me anywhere but in Greece, in the days when God was not considered creator, when He was allowed to be divine and free from the responsibility of the universe." "*Whee!*" went the rakia. "Woof, woof!" went the dog. "We must start," said Mehmed. "I will be ready in a minute," said Militsa, and took the last drop of rakia herself. She looked at her husband and mine and nodded approvingly. "Alas for poor Yelena," she said, "her husband is very fat, he has always been too fat, and her lover in Belgrade is quite an old man."

At last in a cold grey evening we three drove off to see St. George at work. This was a more diverse spectacle than one would have supposed. St. George, who is the very same that is the patron saint of England, is a mysterious and beneficent figure who is trusted to confer fertility for reasons that are now completely hidden. Pope Gelasius, as early as the fifth century, tactfully referred to him as one of those saints "whose names are justly revered among men, but whose actions are known only to God". Gibbon's description of him as a villainous

Army contractor is nonsense ; he was confusing him with a rascally Bishop called George of Laodicea. The other story that he was a Roman officer martyred during the persecutions of Diocletian has, in the opinion of scholars, no better foundation. But they believe that he really existed, and that he was probably martyred about forty miles east of Constantinople some time during the third century. He was apparently a virtuous and heroic person who had some extraordinary adventure with a wild beast that made him the Christian equivalent of Perseus in the popular mind. Whatever this adventure was, it must have taken the form of a powerful intervention on behalf of life, for his legends represent him as raising the dead, saving cities from destroying armies, making planks burst into leaf, and causing milk instead of blood to run from the severed head of a martyr. He himself was three times put to death, being once cut in pieces, once buried deep in the earth, and once consumed by fire, and was three times brought back to life. In Macedonia he is said to cure barrenness of women and of lands, both by the Christians and the Moslems ; for since he had three hundred years start of Mohammed he was not to be dug out of the popular mind.

We saw some of his work as soon as we left the house. We had crossed the bridge and were driving along the embankment, and Militsa was saying, " In that house with the flowers in the balcony lives the girl who was Miss Yugoslavia some years ago, and it is a great misfortune for her, because to marry well one must be correct and not do such things as enter Beauty Contests, and she is quite a good girl, so now she is unmarried and very poor," when I saw that a stream of veiled women dressed in black was passing along the pavement beside the river. It was as if the string of a black necklace had broken and the beads were all rolling the same way. " Yes," said Mehmed, " always on St. George's Eve they come along to this part of the embankment where these poplars are, and they stand and look down into the river." That is all they were doing : standing like flimsy black pillars and looking over the low stone wall at the rushing Vardar. It was the most attenuated rite I have ever seen, the most etiolated ceremony ; it was within a hairsbreadth of not happening at all. Of course, if one cannot show one's face, if one is swaddled by clothing till free movement is impossible, if negation is presented as one's guiding

physical principle, this is the most one can do. The custom obviously bore some relation to the nature worship which is the basic religion of the peoples in this part, with its special preference for water. But it had none of the therapeutic properties of worship, it gave the worshippers none of the release that comes from expressing reverence by a vigorous movement or unusual action, nor did it give any sense of contact with magic forces. They were merely allowed to approach the idea of worship and apprehend it dimly, as they apprehend the outer world through their veils. "Why do they come to this particular part of the embankment?" I asked Mehmed, but he did not know. Yet I think he was fully acquainted with all the local superstitions held by male Moslems.

Soon we took to a bad road that lurched among the bare uplands at the feet of the mountains. It was as if one left the road in the valley that runs from Lewes to Newhaven and tried one's luck over the fields and downs. Beautiful children in fantastic dresses watched us staggering from side to side of the rutted track, courteous old men in white kilts shouted advice over bleak pastures. Someone was leaning against a stunted tree and piping. After two hours or so we came to a great farm that glimmered whitish through the twilight, among the leggy trunks of a young orchard, and Mehmed said, "This is where we are going to stay, though the owner does not yet know it." I felt shy at being an unannounced guest; I strolled nervously in the garden, dipping my nose to the huge flowers of the lilac bushes that were black in the twilight. Then a voice spoke from the house in beautiful English, English that would have been considered remarkably beautiful even if it had been an Englishman who had spoken it, and a handsome man with fair hair, square shoulders and a narrow waist came out and welcomed me. He looked like a certain type of Russian officer, but his face was more distracted, being aware of all sorts of alternatives to the actions for which his body was so perfectly shaped. In the porch there stood his wife, a lovely girl in her middle twenties, and her mother, a still lovely woman with silver hair, who were talking to Militsa and Mehmed with that candid appreciation of their friends' charm which makes Slav life so agreeable.

The perfect note for a visit had been struck at once; but when our host heard that we had come to see the rites of St. George practised in the neighbourhood he started up and said



that we must go at once, for if we left the journey till full darkness it would be impossible to make the journey there and back before midnight. We got back into the car, and with him as our guide we bounced along a dirt-track till we came to a cross-roads with some hovels glimmering through the darkness. "It is here, the Tekiya," said our host. "Yes, this is the Bektashi village," said Mehmed, "I recognise it, I have been here before." I had not before shown any great curiosity as to what we were to see that night, for the reason that I had always found it a waste of time to try to imagine beforehand anything that Yugoslavia was going to offer me. But I knew that Tekiya was the Turkish word for a sanctuary and that the Bektashi were an order of dervishes, that is to say monks who exist to supply the element of mysticism which is lacking in Orthodox Islam. This particular order was founded by a native of Bokhara named Haji Bektash about six hundred years ago, and it was the special cult of the Janissaries, who spread it all over the Balkan Peninsula. It is said to preach an ecstatic pantheism, and to pronounce the elect free to follow their own inspirations regarding morality. I stepped out of the car into the kind of twilight that is as dazzling as brilliant sunshine. The white houses glared through what was otherwise thick darkness, the last light shone like polished steel from pools in a road that could only be deduced. Towards us came some men in fezes, their teeth and the whites of their eyes flashing through the dusk. They greeted us with the easy and indifferent manners of the Moslem villager, always so much more like a city dweller in his superficial contacts than his Slav neighbour, who is more profoundly hospitable and indomitably inquisitive, and they led us to a little house that looked like any other. It disturbed me, as I stumbled towards it through the palpitating dusk, and made travel seem a vain thing, that I could no more have deduced that it was a Moslem sanctuary by looking at it than I had been able to deduce Militsa and Mehmed by looking at Skoplje.

Within, it was a square room with a wooden vaulted ceiling, imperfectly lit by a few candles set in iron brackets waist-high on the plastered walls. Our tremendous amazed shadows looked down on a tall black stone standing in the middle of the room, about seven feet high. There was a small flat stone laid across the top of it ; it might have been wearing a mortar-board,

A string was tied round it, and from this hung flimsy strips of cloth, and beside it lay a collection box. Soon our massive, clear-cut, stolid shadows were brushed across by more delicate shades, and four veiled women were among us. Four times there was the fall of a coin in the collecting-box, four times a black body pressed itself against the black stone, four times black sleeves spread widely and arms stretched as far as possible round its cold girth. "To-night if a woman wishes while she embraces this stone," one of the men explained to us, "and her fingers meet, then her wish shall be granted." "Is that really what they believe?" I asked, and Mehmed and our host confirmed it. Yet it was quite obvious that that was not what the women believed. They were quite unperturbed when their fingers failed to meet, and indeed I do not think I have seen half a dozen women in my life with arms long enough to make the circuit of this stone. The men's mistake was only more evidence of the pitiful furtiveness of the Moslem woman's life, which necessarily defends secrets almost unthreatened by the curiosity of the male.

The women's belief, it could be seen by watching them, lay in the degree of effort they put into the embrace; they must put all their strength, all their passion, into stretching as far as possible, and take to themselves all they could of the stone. Then they must give it their extreme of homage, by raising their veils to bare their lips and kissing it in adoration that makes no reserves. It struck on the mind like a chord and its resolution, this gesture of ultimate greed followed by the gesture of ultimate charity and abnegation. Each woman then receded, fluttering backwards and bringing her whispered prayer to an end by drawing her finger-tips down her face and bosom. They drew tremulously together and then our crasser shadows were alone on the walls, though none of us actually saw them go. It might be thought that these veiled women who had come to seek from a stone the power to perform a universal animal function for the benefit of those who treated them without honour, who were so repressed that they had to dilute to as near to nothingness as might be even such a negative gesture as leaving a room, would be undifferentiated female stuff, mere specimens of mother ooze. Yet these four had actually disclosed their nature to the room and its shadows, and each of these natures was highly individual; from each pair of sleeves

had issued a pair of hands that was unique as souls are. One pair was ageing and had come near to losing hope ; one pair was young but grasped the stone desperately, as if in agony lest hope might go ; one pair grasped the stone as desperately but with an agony that would last five minutes, or even less, if she saw something to make her laugh ; and one pair made the gesture with conscientious exactitude and no urgency, and would, I think, have been happier joining the Orthodox Moslems of Skoplje in their unsubstantial rite down by the river than in this Bektashi traffic with mystery.

As we went out three other veiled women slipped past us into the holy room. They would come all night on this mission, from all villages and towns where the Bektashi order had its adherents, within an orbit of many miles. We drove on through the pulsing and tumbled darkness dispensed by a sky where thick clouds ride under strong star-light. " Now we are going to the tomb of St. George," said Militsa. " There too are many women who want children. Tell me, what did you wish for ? " For we had both kissed the stone. The Moslems had suggested it with a courtesy which meant, I think, that because this was a woman's rite they did not feel it to be truly sacred. " For myself," said Militsa, " I wished for something really terribly drastic politically." I would not have given a penny for Mr. Stoyadinovitch's life if the stone was functioning according to repute.

On a little hillside we saw a glimmer of murky brightness and headed for it. We stepped out into a patch of Derby Day, and saw what one might see on Epsom Downs on the eve of the race, when the gipsies are settling in. On a grassy common people were sitting about, eating and drinking and talking as if there had not yet been established in their minds the convention that associates night with sleep. If one shut one's eyes the hubble-bubble sounded astonished, as if an elementary form of consciousness were expressing its amazement that it should not be still unconscious. A gipsy band thrummed and snorted ; lemonade sellers cried their livid yellow ware ; the gallery of a house overlooking the common was filled with white light, and many heads and shoulders showed black against it. We took a path up the hillside to a little chapel and joined the crowd that pressed into it. It was a new little chapel, not interesting. At *first nothing* took my eye save a number of very vividly coloured

woollen stockings, knitted in elaborate abstract patterns, which were hanging on the icons and on a rope before the altar. But the crowd bore me forward and I saw in the centre of the floor a cross, and about it a thickening of human stuff. "The cross is over the tomb of St. George," whispered Militsa, "and look, oh, look! It is not to be believed! This is the Greek rite of incubation, this is how the Greeks lay all night on the altar of Apollo, so that they could dream themselves into the minds of the gods and know their futures."

Round the cross lay a heap of women in ritual trance, their eyes closed, their breasts rising and falling in the long rhythm of sleep. They lay head to heel, athwart and alongside, one with a shoulder on another's knee, another with a foot in someone's face, tangled and still like a knot of snakes under a stone in winter-time. It seemed to me their sleep was real. Their slow breathing, the lumpiness of their bodies, the anguished, concentrated sealing of their eyes by their lids made me myself feel drowsy. I yawned as I looked down on the face of one woman who had devoted herself to sleep, who had dedicated herself to sleep, who had dropped herself into the depths of sleep as a stone might be dropped down a well. She had pillowed her head on her arm; and on the sleeve of her sheep-skin jacket beside her roughened brow there was embroidered an arch and a tree, the rustic descendant of a delicate Persian design. We were among the shards of a civilisation, the withered husks of a culture. How had this rite contracted! The Greeks had desired to know the future, to acquaint themselves with the majestic minds of the gods. These women's demand on the future was limited to a period of nine months, and the aid they sought lay in a being so remote as to be characterless save for the murmured rumour of beneficence. Nevertheless the rite was splendid even in its ruin. The life that had filled these women was of the wrong sort and did not engender new life, therefore they had poured it forth, they had emptied themselves utterly, and they had laid themselves down in a holy place to be filled again with another sort of life, so strong that it could reproduce itself. This was an act of faith, very commendable in people who had so little reason to feel faith, who had received so little assurance that existence was worthy of continuance.

As we left the chapel we saw an old peasant woman with a

group of friends round her, who held out her hands to two younger women and kissed them on both cheeks. "Take a look at her," said our host, "it was she who saw in a dream that there was a coffin buried on this hillside, and that the body inside it was St. George." We tried to see her face through the darkness, but the night was too thick, and we could not learn whether she bore the stigmata of the visionary or the simpleton. As we passed the apse of the chapel on our way downhill a man went by carrying an electric torch, and its beam showed us that one of the windows was barred with strands of wool, wound from side to side and attached to pieces of wood and metal that had been driven into the wall. "That they do too, the women who want children," said our host; "it must be wool they have spun themselves." On the common a large part of the crowd was gathered round some men and women sitting in a ditch who were having a quarrel, which was curiously pedantic in tone, although they had to shout to drown the gipsy bands and the vendors. They put their cases in long deliberate speeches, which the others then criticised, often with a peevish joy in their own phrases familiar to those who have visited Oxford. Suddenly one of the women in the party took off her sheepskin jacket, threw it on the ground, flung herself down on it and began to weep; and the scene lost its intensity and broke into sympathetic movements round her sobbing body.

The automobile was not ready, and my host and I walked down our road in the darkness. I said, "How beautifully you speak English," and he answered, "Well, I was at Eton. Has Militsa not told you the ridiculous story? I went there by such a roundabout route." But Militsa had told me nothing save that his father had been a great general, distinguished both in the Balkan wars and the Great War of 1914. As this man talked, I realised that I had heard of this general before, as one of the regicides who slew Alexander Obrenovitch and Draga. He himself, he said, had been sent at the age of ten from Serbia to study at the Imperial Military College in St. Petersburg, and had stayed there till he was sixteen. After the Revolution he had escaped over the Urals as one of a small detachment of troops, and in Siberia, after the death of the two officers originally in charge, he became their leader. He took them safely to Vladivostock, sailed back by the United States to Europe, and at Nice was re-united to his family, who had for

long mourned him as dead. Then he was sent to London, and soon was summoned to the War Office. In the waiting-room he found amusement in playing noughts and crosses against himself to find out whether he was going to be sent to France or to Salonica. But the officer who saw him said, "We think it would be good if you went to Eton for a year." It was as if Lief Ericson, back from America, were sent to school. He was indignant, but came to love Eton; and as the war was over when he had finished his year, he went to Cambridge as an agricultural student, so that he could farm this tract of Macedonia which was given to his father in reward for his services. So now he was trying to repair the curse of sterility laid on the land by the Turk, and he was playing his part in politics, obstinately re-stating the Slav's fundamental preference for democracy. As he talked it became apparent that his air was muted and indirect because he had read extraordinary things on the last page of history which had been turned over. He would not be surprised at anything he might read on the next, and he would not, indeed, be surprised if some page was not turned over but torn out of the book.

On our return we were given an immense dish of bacon and eggs, a huge Swiss roll, sheep's cheese, home-made bread and strong wine. Afterwards while the others talked, I looked round at the pictures on the living-room wall. There was, according to the custom in old-fashioned Serb houses, the usual gallery of small prints, about six inches by four, hung in a group, that showed the Karageorgevitches and the Obrenovitches: a composite nationalist icon. My host came over to see what I was looking at, and lifted some off the wall so that I could look at them in the full lamplight. "Here is one of Karageorge that I do not like," he said, "it makes him look like Hitler. He cannot have looked like Hitler, for he was large and finely built and trained in manly exercises. But I dislike it that our people should have liked a picture of our leader which makes him look a fanatic, a dervish. I want all such things not to be, I want man to be reasonable."

Most of the other pictures on the wall were photographs of my host's father, the great general, a small fine-boned man with the expression of pure and docile submission to rule so noticeable in any body of young Serbian soldiers, which in his later photographs had grown to a stare of mystical contemplation.

There was one picture that showed him sitting in a pinewood with the murdered King Alexander, who for once looked easy and happy, his mouth made of two lips and not a compression making a signal to give strength to the distressed will. "My father was a most wonderful man," said my host, and stopped and sighed. The strongest of our beloveds, once they are dead, seem too fragile to be spoken of to strangers. "But this is the photograph I like best, it is my father with his mother, who was a peasant."

Byzantine art is hardly stylised at all. This woman, sitting with a white cloth about her head, in a rigid armament of stuffs, exercised the enormous authority and suffered the enormous grief of the Madonnas. She was the officer of earth, she had brought her children into its broad prison, and her face showed how well she knew what bitter bread they would eat in captivity. Her nose was prominent, a fleshless ridge of bone as it is in many frescoes, and her cheeks were hollow. Such women have to suckle their children too long, because the kings and magi of the world have never yet been ready to take them over at their weaning and give them a liberal diet from the fields, such women all their lives eat only when their husbands and sons have had enough; so they are spare. If she had found life so meanly disposed, why did she condemn her children to suffer it? She could not tell us; but on that point she is inflexible. And her son honours her for this indefensible insistence. He stands by her in reverence, but his slimness and strength and lightness of bearing, even the dedicated fervour in his eyes, so different from her solidity, show a revolt against her decree. He will escape from life, from the prison to which she has delivered him, not directly into death, but into a new kind of life, contrary to the instincts. So he will interfere with natural growth by subjecting himself to unnatural discipline and putting himself to impossible tasks, such as the upsetting of kings and the overthrow of empires. The fertility for which women were asking the gods everywhere in the dark night over Macedonia was not as simple a gift as they supposed. They were begging for the proper conduct of a period of nine months and a chance to ripen its fruits, they would obtain the bloodstained eternity of human history. My host put the photographs back on the wall and said, "I wonder what pictures will hang here when my two little children, who are now sleeping upstairs, are as old as we are." He came

*back and sat by the lamp, his head on his hand, and spoke of Mussolini in the West and Hitler in the North. It was clear that he knew that perhaps no other picture would hang on these walls, that these pictures in front of us might some day be brought to the ground with the slash of a bayonet and die under the hot tide of their own glass when the smoke rose from the burning walls. Alone of all these women in the night Militsa had asked for something "really terribly drastic politically", trying to protect them and their children with a brilliant thought, an Ariel to aid the Madonna.*

### ST GEORGE'S EVE: II

Because we were going to see a ceremony that took place on a stone at Ovche Polye, that is to say the Sheep's Field, an upland plateau some miles away, we got up at half-past five and set off in a grey morning. A cold wind moved about the hillside, marbling the fields of young wheat; and along the lanes peasants on pack-horses, nodding with drowsiness, jogged back from the chapel of St. George's tomb, their cloaks about them. We took to the good road that runs south beside the Vardar down a gorge to Veles, under steep grassy hillsides splashed here and there with fields of deep-blue flowers and thickets of wild roses. As we got nearer the town, we saw that there were people encamped on the brow of each hill, eating and drinking and confronting the morning. Men stood up and drank wine out of bottles, looking at the whiteness above the mountain-tops.

"How beautiful are these rites," said Militsa, "that make people adore the common thing, that say to all, 'You shall have the fresh eye of the poet, you shall never take beauty for granted!'" "Yes," said Mehmed, "I am down here in an automobile, because I am a lazy fellow, but I am up there with them in spirit, for I know what the morning means. You know, I should be dead. I should have died twenty-three years ago in prison. For on June the twenty-eighth, 1914, I was walking in Vienna with my cousin, who was like me, a Herzegovinian nationalist, and we came into the Ring, and we saw that everybody was very excited, and we heard something about Serbs and the heir to the throne being killed. We thought it was our Serbian Crown Prince who had been killed, so we were very



sad, and we sat down in a café and had a drink. Then a news-boy came by and I bought a paper, and I saw that it was Franz Ferdinand who had been killed by a Serb, and I got up and said, 'Come, we must escape to Serbia, for now the end of all has come. Let us hurry for the train.' But he would not come with me, because he knew how awful the war was going to be and he did not want to admit that it was bound to happen. So I argued with him till I pulled out my watch and saw that I was going to miss the train, so I took to my heels and just caught it. My cousin was arrested that night, and so would I have been if I had stayed; and my cousin died in prison, and I do not think that the Austrians would have been very careful to keep me alive. When I think of that, I feel what those people up there are feeling. Ouf! The day, just as a day, is good."

As we drew towards Veles we passed a gipsy family trudging homewards, the young daughter in immense balloon trousers of bright pink satin: a primitive cart with some people dressed in black and white, profile and impassive as Egyptians, from a far village, probably in the Bitolj district; a cart of more modern fashion driven by a plump and handsome young woman in Western clothes, who, on seeing Militsa, threw down her reins and shouted for us to stop. She was a Serbian who had been coached by Militsa in Latin for her Science preliminary in Belgrade some years before, had later married a Macedonian politician and now ran a chemist's shop in a hill town above Veles.

"Why did you not tell me you were coming?" she reproached them. "I am going to the slava of a friend who lives on the other side of Skoplje, but heaven knows I would have liked far better to stay at home and entertain you. For to-day I take a holiday and indeed I have a right to it. I am always on my feet from morning till night before St. George's Day." "Why is that?" asked Militsa. "Oh, all these women who go to the monasteries to ask for children buy powder and rouge and lipstick to get themselves up for the outing," said the chemist, "they come in all day. But where are you going?" "We are going to the Stone in the Sheep's Field," said Militsa. "Oh, you will like that, if you are not too late," said the chemist, "but I think you will be late if you do not hurry. It is a very interesting rite, and I think there is something in it, to judge from my own case. I went there two years ago, because it was

nearly five years since Marko and I had been married and we had no children, and I did the easiest thing you can do there, which is to climb up on to the stone and throw a jar down on the ground to break it. Three times I threw down my jar, and it would not break, and still I have no children. I will not keep you any longer, for all the people will be gone unless you make haste."

The road then mounted, we saw in the distance Veles lying like a mosaic, cracked across by the gorge of the Vardar, and we left the road for a hillside track that climbed a pass between two summits black with people saluting the morning, and took us into the Sheep's Field. Here we entered quite a new kind of landscape. It is a wide sea of pastures and arable land, rising and falling in gentle waves within a haven of blue-grey mountains. Under a grey sky this place would be featureless, in a Macedonian summer it must be a hardly visible trough of heat. But this was spring, and the morning was pearly, there was a mild wind and soft sunshine, and all forms and colours in the scene were revealed in their essence. The earth on this upland plain is a delicate red, not so crimson as in the lowlands. Young wheat never looks so green as when it grows from such soil, and where it carries no crop it is transparent and nacreous, because of the powdered limestone which sprays it with the insubstantial conspicuousness of a comet's tail. Of the surrounding hills one stood alone, magnificent in sharp austerity of cliff and pyramid; it is called "the witness of God". As the sun rose higher there was manifest in the valley a light that was like Greek light, a steady radiance which stood like a divine person between the earth and the sky, and was the most important content of the horizon, more important than anything on the ground.

The road we followed became a casual assembly of ruts that persisted across the Field for something like ten miles. We saw, near and far, a few bleak white villages, but we touched none of them, save where we crossed a spindly railway by the side of two preposterously large buildings, one a gendarmerie, the other a combined station and post-office. The Sheep's Field was the subject of an unfortunate experiment in land settlement which was among the early mistakes of the new Yugoslav state after the war. It planted some unhappy families from the North on this highly unsuitable site without the necessary

equipment and governed them ill, being entirely inexperienced in the arts and sciences of colonisation. On the other side of this railway line we began to come on groups of peasants, the women glorious even from far off because of the soft blaze of their multi-coloured aprons. All were walking slowly, and though they looked quite good-humoured it was obvious that they were very tired. Some carts passed us too, and in these people were lying fast asleep. On the sheepskin jacket of one sleeping woman I saw, as we bumped slowly by, the same Persian pattern I had noted on the sleeve of the woman in trance on the tomb of St. George.

It became apparent that we were approaching some focal point, which was not a village. The track was running along the crest of one of the land-waves, and though this was not very high it gave us an advantage over the countryside for several miles. We could see a number of people, perhaps twenty in all, who were travelling in every direction away from some spot on the next crest, a spot which was still not to be discovered by the eye. Some of these people were walking, some were in carts, some of them rode on pack-horses ; and there passed close by us a party of dark and slender young horsemen, galloping over the pastures on better mounts than I had yet seen in Macedonia, with a gay confidence and a legendary quality that showed them to be the elegants of some isolated and archaic community. " But they are all going away ! " exclaimed Militsa. Her husband called out to one of the horsemen, " Are we right for the stone, for the Cowherd's Rock, and are we too late ? " The young man reined up his horse with a flourish and trotted towards us, making a courteous gesture with a hand gloved in purple. In a flute-like voice, sweeter than is usual among Europeans, he answered, " Yes, go on, you will see it in a minute or two ; you cannot be mistaken, for it is the only stone on the Sheep's Field, and there are still some people there."

Our car left the track and struggled up a stretch of pasture till it could go no further. When we got out we were so near the rock that we could see its colour. It was a flat-topped rock, uneven in shape, rising to something like six feet above the ground, and it was red-brown and gleaming, for it was entirely covered with the blood of the beasts that had been sacrificed on it during the night. A dozen men were sitting or lying at the foot of the rock, most of them wearing the fez ; and one man

was very carefully laying a little child on a rug not far away. The grass we walked on from the car was trodden and muddled and littered with paper, and as we came nearer the rock we had to pick our way among a number of bleeding cocks' heads. The spectacle was extremely disgusting. The colour of spilt blood is not properly a colour, it is in itself discoloured, it is a visible display of putrescence. In every crevice of the red-brown rock there had been stuck wax candles, which now hung down in a limp fringe of greasy yellow tails, smeared with blood. Strands of wool, some of them dyed red or pink, had been wound round the rock and were now daubed with this grease and blood. A great many jars had been thrown down from the rock and lay in shards among the cocks' heads on the trodden grass. Though there was nothing faecal to be seen, the effect was of an ill-kept earth closet.

It would have been pleasant to turn round and run back to the car and drive away as quickly as possible, but the place had enormous authority. It was the body of our death, it was the seed of the sin that is in us, it was the forge where the sword was wrought that shall slay us. When it had at last been made visible before the eye as it is — for we are all brought up among disguised presentations of it — it would have been foolish not to stay for a little while and contemplate it. I noticed that the man who had been settling the child on the rug was now walking round the rock with a black lamb struggling in his arms. He was a young gipsy, of the kind called Gunpowder gipsies, because they used to collect saltpetre for the Turkish Army, who are famous for their beauty, their cleanliness, their fine clothes. This young man had the features and bearing of an Indian prince, and a dark golden skin which was dull as if it had been powdered yet exhaled a soft light. His fine linen shirt was snow-white under his close-fitting jacket, his elegant breeches ended in soft leather boots, high to the knee, and he wore a round cap of fine fur which made it probable that his name was Camaralzaman. He made the circle three times and stopped, then bent and kissed the greasy blood-stained rock. Then he lifted up the lamb, and a man standing on the rock took it from him. It looked to me as if this man held the lamb in a grip that anaesthetised it, for it did not struggle any more and lay still at his feet without making a sound or a movement.

Now the gipsy fetched the child from the rug and brought it to the rock. It was a little girl of eighteen months or so, dressed in very clean white clothes. Her white bonnet was embroidered in designs of the Byzantine tradition in deep brown thread, and was tied with a satin bow of a particularly plangent sky-blue. Her father handed her up to another man who was standing on the rock, and then climbed up himself and set her down tenderly on as clean a place as he could find for her among the filth. Now the man who was holding the lamb took it to the edge of the rock and drew a knife across its throat. A jet of blood spurted out and fell red and shining on the browner blood that had been shed before. The gipsy had caught some on his fingers, and with this he made a circle on the child's forehead. Then he got down again and went round the rock another three times, carrying another black lamb. "He is doing this," a bearded Moslem standing by explained, "because his wife got this child by coming here and giving a lamb, and all children that are got from the rock must be brought back and marked with the sign of the rock." The gipsy kissed the rock again and handed up the lamb, and climbed to the sacrificial platform, and again the sacrifice was offered; but this time he not only marked the child with the circle but caught some of the blood in a little glass bottle. Then he carried her back to the rug, and the man with the knife laid the carcasses of the lambs, which were still faintly smoking at the throat, on the grass, among the shards and the cocks' heads. Under the opening glory of the morning the stench from the rock mounted more strongly and became sickening.

The man with the knife and his friends gathered round us and told us of the virtue of the place. Many women had got children by giving cocks and lambs to the rock. One woman who had come all the way from Prilep had had a child after she had lived in barren marriage for fifteen years. But it was foolish to doubt the efficacy of making sacrifices to the rock, for people would not go on doing it if it were not efficacious, and they had done it for a very long time, for hundreds of years. They should, of course, have said thousands. Their proof, which should have been valid if man were a reasonable animal, was therefore stronger than they supposed. The men who told us these things were good animals, with bright eyes and long limbs and good bones. They were also intelligent. Their

remarks on the stone were based on insufficient information, but were logical enough, and when they went on to talk of matters less mysterious than fertility, such as their experiences in the last war, they showed considerable good sense and powers of observation. One spoke a little English, another spoke fluent French; two or three seemed to follow skilled trades. But what they were doing at the rock was abominable.

All I had seen the night before was not discreditable to humanity. I had not found anything being done which was likely to give children to women who were barren for physiological reasons; but I had seen ritual actions that were likely to evoke the power of love, which is not irrelevant to these matters. When the Moslem women in the Tekiya put out their arms to embrace the black stone and dropped their heads to kiss it, they made a gesture of the same nature, though not so absolute, as that which men and women make when they bend down to kiss the cloth which lies instead of Christ on the holy table at Easter. Such a gesture is an imitation by the body of the gesture made by the soul in loving. It says, "I will pour myself in devotion to you, I will empty myself without hoping for return, and I can do this serenely, for I know that as I empty myself I shall be filled again." Human beings cannot remind themselves too often that they are capable of performing this miracle, the existence of which cannot be proved by logic.

The women who lay in ritual sleep on the tomb of St. George were working as fitly as the women in the Tekiya for the health of their souls. We prune our minds to fit them into the garden of ordinary life. We exclude from our consciousness all sorts of knowledge that we have acquired because it might distract us from the problems we must solve if we are to go on living, and it even might make us doubt whether it is prudent to live. But sometimes it is necessary for us to know where we are in eternity as well as in time, and we must lift this ban. Then we must let our full knowledge invade our minds, and let our memories of birth crawl like serpents from their cave and our foreknowledge of death spread its wide shadow. There is nothing shameful for women whose senses have been sharpened by the grief of barrenness to lie down on the tomb of one whose life was visible marvel and explore the invisible marvels of their own nature. Their ritual sleep was wholesome as common sleep.

But the rite of the Sheep's Field was purely shameful. It was a huge and dirty lie. There is a possibility that barrenness due to the mind could be aided by a rite that evoked love and broke down peevish desires to be separate and alone, or that animated a fatigued nature by refreshment from its hidden sources. But this could do nothing that it promised. Women do not get children by adding to the normal act of copulation the slaughter of a lamb, the breaking of a jar, the decapitation of a cock, the stretching of wool through blood and grease. If there was a woman whose womb could be unsealed by witnessing a petty and pointless act of violence, by seeing a jet of blood fall from a lamb's throat on a rock wet with stale and stinking blood, her fertility would be the reverse of motherhood, she would have children for the purpose of hating them.

The rite made its false claims not out of delusion ; it was a conscious cheat. Those who had invented it and maintained it through the ages were actuated by a beastly retrogression, they wanted again to enjoy the dawn of nastiness as it had first broken over their infant minds. They wanted to put their hands on something weaker than themselves and prod its mechanism to funny tricks by the use of pain, to smash what was whole, to puddle in the warm stickiness of their own secretions. Hence the slaughter of the lambs and the cocks, the breaking of the jars, the mess of blood and grease. But the intelligence of man is sound enough to have noticed that if the fully-grown try to go back to the infantile they cannot succeed, but must go on to imbecility and mania. Therefore those who wish to indulge in this make the huge pretension for it that it is a secret way of achieving what is good, and that there is a mysterious process at work in the world which has no relation to causality. This process is a penny-in-the-slot machine of idiot character. If one drops in a piece of suffering, a blessing pops out at once. If one squares death by offering him a sacrifice, one will be allowed some share in life for which one has hungered. Thus those who had a lech for violence could gratify it and at the same time gain authority over those who loved peace and life. It could be seen that the slaughterer of the lamb was very well pleased with his importance, and some of the Moslems round the rock smugly hastened to tell us that they had performed his office some time during the night. It was disgusting to think that they enjoyed any prestige, for

though they were performing an action that was thousands of years old and sanctified by custom, there was about them a horrid air of whimsicality, of caprice, of instability. For all their pretensions they were doing what was not necessary. They had achieved unsurpassably what Monsieur André Gide licks his lips over, *l'acte gratuit*. This is the very converse of goodness, which must be stable, since it is a response to the fundamental needs of mankind, which themselves are stable.

I knew this rock well. I had lived under the shadow of it all my life. All our Western thought is founded on this repulsive pretence that pain is the proper price of any good thing. Here it could be seen how the meaning of the Crucifixion had been hidden from us, though it was written clear. A supremely good man was born on earth, a man who was without cruelty, who could have taught mankind to live in perpetual happiness; and because we are infatuated with this idea of sacrifice, of shedding innocent blood to secure innocent advantages, we found nothing better to do with this passport to deliverance than destroy him. There is that in the universe, half inside and half outside our minds, which is wholly adorable; and this it was that men killed when they crucified Jesus Christ. Our shame would be absolute, were it not that the crime we intended cannot in fact be committed. It is not possible to kill goodness. There is always more of it, it does not take flight from our accursed earth, it perpetually asks us to take what we need from it.

Of that lesson we had profited hardly at all, because resourcefulness rises from the rock like the stench of its blood. The cruel spirit which informed it saved itself by a ruse, a theological ruse. So successful has this ruse been that the rock disgusted me with the added loathsomeness of familiarity, as the drunkenness of a man known to be a habitual alcoholic is more offensive than the accidental excess of a temperate man. Its rite, under various disguises, had been recommended to me since my infancy by various religious bodies, by Roman Catholicism, by Anglicanism, by Methodism, by the Salvation Army. Since its earliest days Christianity has been compelled to seem its opposite. This stone, the knife, the filth, the blood, is what many people desire beyond anything else, and they fight to obtain it. There was an enemy of love and Christ called Saul of Tarsus who could not abide this



demonstration by the cross that man was vile and cruelty the essence of his vileness, and for that reason persecuted Christians till his honesty could not tolerate his denial of the adorability of goodness and showed it to him under the seeming of a bright light. But the belief of his heart was in force and in pain, and his mind, which was very Jewish in its refusal to accept defeat, tinkered incessantly with the gospel till it found a way of making it appear as if cruelty was the way of salvation. He developed a theory of the Atonement which was pure nonsense yet had the power to convince, for it was spoken quickly in tones of genius to excited people who listened trustfully, knowing the innocence of Christ and assuming that everything said in his name was innocent also, and being tainted, as all human beings are, with the same love of blood as the speaker. This monstrous theory supposes that God was angry with man for his sins and that He wanted to punish him for these, not in any way that might lead to his reformation, but simply by inflicting pain on him; and that He allowed Christ to suffer this pain instead of man and thereafter was willing on certain terms to treat man as if he had not committed these sins. This theory flouts reason at all points, for it is not possible that a just God should forgive people who are wicked because another person who was good endured agony by being nailed to a cross.

There was a gap in the theory which could never be bridged, but those who loved cruelty tried from then on to bridge it. There were many lesser ones of this sort and one great one, Augustine, so curiously called a saint. Genius was his, and warm blood, but his heart was polluted like the rock. He loved love with the hopeless infatuation of one who, like King Lear, cannot love. His mother and he were like dam and cub in the strength of their natural relationship, but his appetite for nastiness made him sully it. Throughout their lives they achieved from time to time an extreme sweetness, but the putrescence gained, and at her death he felt an exaltation as mean as anything recorded in literature, because she died in Italy, far from her African home, and therefore could not be buried as she had desired, beside her beloved husband. His relationship with God covered as wide a range. He wanted a supreme being sterilised of all that his genius recognised as foul, but he did not want him to be positively good. He hated all the milder aspects of virtue, he despised the spirit that lets all things flower accord-

ing to their being, for he liked too well to draw the knife across the lamb's throat. In his desire to establish cruelty in a part of holiness he tried to find a logical basis for the abominable doctrine of St. Paul, and he adopted a theory that the Devil had acquired a rightful power over man because of his sins, and lost it because he forfeited all rights by crucifying Christ who was sinless. This went far to proving the universe to be as nonsensical as the devotees of the rock wished it to be. It presents us with a Devil who was apparently to a certain degree respectable, at least respectable enough to be allowed by God to exercise his legal rights in the universe, until he killed Christ. This robs the wickedness of man of its ultimate importance. His sins were evidently not so bad, just what you might expect from the subjects of a disorderly native prince. It was perhaps that which recommended the theory to Augustine, who knew he was wicked.

It was certainly that which recommended Augustine's theory to Martin Luther, who was not even like the rock, who was the rock, with the sullied grass, the cocks' heads, the grease, the stinking blood. He was the ugliest of the great, a hog magnified and with speech. His only virtue was the virtue of the wild boar; he was courageous. But all other merits he lacked, and strove to muddy life into a sty with his ill opinion of it. He howled against man's gift of reason, and in one of his sermons he cried out to his hearers to throw shit in her face, because she was the Devil's whore, rotten with itch and leprosy, who ought to be kept in the privy. He hated reason for a cause; because it exposed the idiocy of Augustine's theory of atonement, which was dear to him in its bloody violence, which was dear to him because it substituted joy in murder for remorse at the murder of goodness. His honesty blurted out that there was no sense whatsoever in the idea of God's acceptance of Christ's death as a sacrifice for man, but all the same he smacked his lips over it, it was good, it was gorgeous, it was eternal life. Because of him Protestantism has bleated ever since of the blood of the lamb, though not more loudly than Roman Catholicism.

So there has been daily won a victory for evil, since so many of the pious give divine honours to the cruelty which Christ came to earth to expose. If God were angry with man and wanted to punish him, and then let him go scot free because he derived such pleasure from the sufferings of Christ, then

the men who inflicted these sufferings must be the instruments of our salvation, the procurers of God's pleasures, they are at least as high as the angels. The grinning and consequential man standing on the rock with a stained knife in his grubby hand is made a personage necessary to the spiritual world ; and because cruelty was built into us in our mothers' womb we are glad of this, while at the same time everything in us that approves of kindness and can love knows that it is an obscene lie. So it has happened that all people who have not been perverted by the West into caring for nothing but machine-made articles (among which a Church designed to be primarily a social organisation can fairly be classed) have found Christianity a torturing irritation, since it offers both the good and the evil in us the most supreme satisfaction imaginable and threatens them with the most final frustration. We are continually told to range ourselves with both the crucified and the crucifiers, with innocence and guilt, with kind love and cruel hate. Our breasts echo for ever with the cries " In murdering goodness we sinned " and " By murdering goodness we were saved." " The lamb is innocent and must not be killed," " The dead lamb brings us salvation," so we live in chaos. This state is the less likely to be relieved because those who defend the rock are too cunning to commit their case to terms that could be grasped and disputed. Though the doctrine of the Atonement profoundly affects most public and private devotions, it has never yet been defined in any creed or by any general Council of the Churches.

Nearly all writers dip their pens in inkwells tainted with this beastliness. Shakespeare was obsessed by it. He was fully aware of the horror of this rock, but he yielded to its authority. He believed that the rite was in accord with reality, which he thought to be perverse in character. He recognised the adorability of goodness, in its simplicity and in its finer shades, as in worsted kingliness or a magician's age. But there filters into his work from the depths of his nature a nostalgia for infantile nastiness, a love of groping for trout in the peculiar rivers of the body, a lech for cruelty which hardly took pleasure in it, but longed sickly for consummation with the disgusting and destructive but just moment, as martyrs long for their doom. He who perfectly understood the nature of love, who knew that " love is not love which alters when it alteration finds, or bends with the remover to remove ", felt under an

obligation to castrate it by smearing the sexual function which is the means of bringing together most lovers in the world, be they husbands and wives or parents and children. His respect for the rock forced him to write *King Lear* and take up all lambs of the herd one by one and draw his knife across their throats. All kinds of love are in that play presented as worthless : the love of parent for child, of child for parent, of married people and illicit lovers, all are impotent or bestial. But at the end the part of Shakespeare that was a grown man cries out that there is no health in the world save through love, that without it life is madness and death. It is not to the credit of mankind that the supreme work of art produced by Western civilisation should do nothing more than embody obsession with this rock and revolt against it. Since we have travelled thus far from the speechless and thoughtless roots of our stock we should have travelled further. There must be something vile in us to make us linger, age after age, in this insanitary spot.

But some were not with us at the rock, but with the sunlight which the stench only so faintly disturbed, which shone inviolate above the mountains. That is the special value of Mozart. It is not that he was kind. When he wanted a lamb for food it had to die. But in all his music there is no phrase which consented to anything so lacking in precision as this ritual slaughter, so irrelevant to its professed purpose as this assault on infertility, nor does he ever concur in the belief that the disagreeable is somehow of magical efficacy. He believes that evil works nothing but mischief ; otherwise it would not be evil. " Psst ! Psst ! " says Leporello, beckoning the masked strangers in the garden, and bidding them to a ball ; but since wickedness is the host it is no ball but an occasion for rape and bloodshed. After Don Juan is dead the characters of the play who are good, be it in solemnity or in lightness, gather together in a nightingale burst of song, because the departure of cruelty allows their goodness to act as it must according to its own sweet process. The same precision, the same refusal to be humbugged by the hypocritical claims of cruelty, account for the value of Jane Austen's work, which is so much greater than can be accounted for by its apparent content. But suavity of style is not the secret, for William Blake is rough. His rejection of the rock took another form, he searched his mind for belief in its fraud like a terrified woman feeling her breast for a cancer, he gave

himself up to prophetic fury that his mind might find its way back to the undefiled sources of its knowledge of goodness. Here on the Sheep's Field it could be seen where the cleavage lies that can be apprehended to run through art and life : on one side are the people who are accomplices of the rock and on the other those who are its enemy. It appeared also where the cleavage lay in our human nature which makes us broken and futile. A part of us is enamoured of the rock and tells us that we should not reject it, that it was solemn and mystical and only the shallow denied the value of sacrifice. Because here a perfect myth had been found for a fundamental but foul disposition of the mind, we were all on an equality with the haggard and grimy peasant, his neckerchief loose about a goitre, who now slouched to the rock, the very man to attend a nocturnal rite late the next morning, and held up a twitching lamb to the feezed executioner, who was scrambling consequentially to the squalid summit.



## OLD SERBIA

### *The Plain of Kossovo I*

OUR road from Skoplje to the Kossovo Polye, the Field of the Blackbirds, took us towards grey hills patterned with shadows blue as English bluebells by a valley that had the worn look, the ageing air that comes on the southern landscape as soon as the fruit blossom has passed. Soon Dragutin made us get out because we had come to a famous well, and we found sitting by the waters a couple of old Albanian Moslems, paupers in rags and broken sandals, who were quietly merry as the morning. "Good day to you," said Constantine. "What are you doing here?" It was a natural question, for this was far between villages, and they did not look to be persons of independent means. "I am doing nothing," said the older of the two. "What, nothing?" "Yes, nothing," he said, his grin gashing his beard widely. He had received moral instruction somewhere, he had learned enough about the obligation of honest toil to find a conscious joy in idleness. "Shame on you!" mocked Constantine. "And your friend?" "He has come to help me!" said the Albanian; and over our glasses of stinging water, risen virile from mountainy depths, we jeered at industry.

But back in the car Constantine slumped. It was as if he were a very sick man, for he was sleepy, fretful, inferior to himself, and quarrelsome. He could put nothing in a way that was not an affront. Now he said, "We will stop at Grachanitsa, the church I told you of on the edge of Kossovo Plain, but I do not think you will understand it, because it is very personal to us Serbs, and that is something you foreigners can never grasp. It is too difficult for you, we are too rough and too deep for your

smoothness, and your shallowness. That is why most foreign books about us are insolently wrong. In my department I see all books about us that are published abroad, because I must censor them, and usually I am astonished by their insolence, which for all the pretences made by Western Europe and America to give our peoples culture is nothing more than the insolence of a nasty peasant who has learned some trick that lifts him up above the other peasants, who lends them money at usury and then lifts his chin at their misery and says 'Peuh! what a stink!' but who is still ignorant like the worst of peasants. Did you read John Gunther's *Inside Europe*? Well, was it not a disgusting, a stupid book! How glad I was to forbid the sale of this imbecile book!"

"But it was not a bad book," I objected. "It was altogether bad," said Constantine, "it was ill-informed and what he did not know he could not guess." "Yes, I know some of it was not as good as the rest," I said, "but there were two things in it which were quite excellent: the descriptions of Dolfuss's death and the Reichstag trial. And in any case you should not have censored it." "And why not?" screamed Constantine. "And why not?" "Because," I said, "you know perfectly well that you could not censor *Inside Europe* except by applying standards so strict that they would prevent the publication of any sincere book on any subject." "You are wrong," he shrieked, "there is something your English brain does not know that our Serb blood is sure of, and that is that it is right to stamp on books written by such fools. Why should Western cretins drool their spittle on our sacred things?" He had, of course, censored *Inside Europe* in defiance of his own convictions just as Voltaire might, once in a while, have grimaced and put his liberal conscience to the door just for the sake of taking a holiday from his own nature. But Constantine was pretending to be somebody totally unlike himself, a stupid Prussian officer, a truculent Italian clerk, with whom he had so little in common that he could not persist in his imitation very long, and slumped into silence, his chin on his chest and his belly falling forward in a soft heap. He looked years older, and congested. It was as if in his abandonment to Gerda's nihilism he had withdrawn his consent to every integrating process, even to the circulation of his blood.

Nothing interested him on our journey. He did not leave

the car with us when we got out to take some meadowsweet and wild roses, though it was his usual custom to follow us while we gathered flowers, relating to our bent behinds stories of his sexual or academic prowess. "And when I closed my bedroom door that night," we would hear as our fingers closed round the innocent stems, "the wife of the Swiss minister jumped out of the wardrobe, quite naked," or "Do you understand truly the theory of prime numbers? It is something that throws a light on history. I will explain it to you, for I am a mathematician, I." But now he sat in the car, neither asleep nor awake, but simply unhappy. We had to laugh alone when we were given a proof, more absolute than could be given by any homing bird, that the year had come to its kind ripeness. In a field outside one of the dullish Moslem villages which dappled these hillsides with poplars and minarets, we saw an old peasant look up into the sunshine and wipe the sweat from his brow, with the air of one observing clinical symptoms, and enact his verdict by changing from his winter to his summer clothes. No process could be simpler. He stepped out of a fine pair of those white serge trousers with allusive embroideries round the loins and the mysterious affixment to the hip-bone, and he took up his hoe again. He was of the opinion that his shirt, which now showed a neat waist and a handsome gathered tail, and his under-pants made as good a summer suit as anybody needed, and he was right. But to the Western eye the publicity of the adjustment was very diverting. It was as if a stockbroker, talking to a client, should mark a patch of brightness on his office wall and should therefore strip off his coat and waistcoat and trousers, continuing his talk the while, serene in a common understanding that from now on all sane men faced a warmer world in their underclothes.

But Constantine came to life again when the car stopped under a little hill surmounted with a new white church. "This is our church that we Serbs built for Kosovo," he said; "from there we will see the plain where the Turks defeated us and enslaved us, where after five hundred years of slavery we showed that we were not slaves." He was red, he was passionate, he panted, he was as he was when he was happy. We followed a path to the church through the long grass, and as our steps brought us higher there spread before us a great plain. Dragutin clenched his fist and shouted down at the earth, where the dead



Turks lay. To him the dead Christians were in heaven or ghosts, but not under the ground, not scattered lifeless bones ; only the Turks perished thus utterly. Then we were stilled by the stillness of Kossovo. It is not one of the plains, like the vega of Granada or the English fens, that are flat as a floor, it lacks that sly look of geological aberration, of earth abandoning its essential irregularity. Its prototype is Salisbury Plain : the land lies loosely, like a sleeper, in a cradle of featureless hills. Not by any means is the ground level. There a shoulder rises, here a hand supports the sleeper's head. But it is obviously prostrate and passive, it has none of the active spirit which makes mountain and forest and the picturesque valley. It is active only as a sleeping body is, with that simplest residual activity, without which sleep would be death, without which the plain would be a desert : the grass pricks the sod, the fallow field changes its substances in biding its time, the green corn surpasses its greenness, but there is no excess beyond these simple functions.

It is the character of the skies that overarch plains to be not only wider than is common, but higher ; and here one cloudy continent rode above another, under a vault visible yet of no colour except space. Here light lived. Its rays, brassy because it was nearly the summer, mild because it had been a bad spring, travelled slowly, high and low, discovering terraces of snow beyond the cradling hills on peaks of unseen mountains, the white blocks of a new settlement in a fold of falling fields, and the passage over downlands of a flock of sheep, cream-coloured and nigger-brown and slow-footed as stupidity. Those houses and those herds showed that there was here a world of human activity : thousands of men and women, even tens of thousands, lived and worked and sweated on Kossovo. But the plain absorbed them and nullified them by its own indifference, and there was shown before our eyes the first of all our disharmonies, the basis of our later tragedies : the division between man and nature. In childhood, when we fall on the ground we are disappointed that it is hard and hurts us. When we are older we expect a less obvious but perhaps more extravagant impossibility in demanding that there should be a correspondence between our lives and their setting ; it seems to all women, and to many men, that destiny should at least once in their lives place them in a moonlit forest glade and send them love to

match its beauty. In time we have to accept it that the ground does not care whether we break our noses on it, and that a moonlit forest glade is as often as not empty of anything but moonlight, and we solace ourselves with the love that is the fruit of sober judgment, and the flower of perfectly harmonious chance. We even forget what we were once foolish enough to desire. Then suddenly at some crisis of incongruity, when we see the site of a tragic historical event that ought to be blasted and is green and smiling, or pass a garden in full blossom when we are carrying our dead to burial, we recall our disappointment at this primary incongruity, and feel bitter desolation. The earth is not our mother's bosom. It shows us no special kindness. We cannot trust it to take sides with us. It makes us, its grass is our flesh, it lets us walk about on it, but this is all it will do for us ; and since the earth is what is not us, and therefore a symbol of destiny and of God, we are alone and terrified.

Kosovo, more than any other historical site I know, arouses that desolation. It spreads peacefully into its vast, gentle distances, slow winds polishing it like a cloth passing over a mirror, turning the heads of the standing grain to the light. It has a look of innocence which is the extreme of guilt. For it is crowded with the dead, who died in more than their flesh, whose civilisation was cast with them into their graves. It is more tragic even than its own legend, which with the dishonesty and obstinacy of a work of art commemorates one out of several battles of Kosovo. That battle which was fought under the leadership of Tsar Lazar in 1389, and placed the Serbs under the yoke of the Turks, was followed by three others of a major character, in which the Serbs stood up before the Turks and had their death demonstrated to them, the complete annihilation of their will established. Fourteen years later the son of Tsar Lazar fought here for the shrunken title of Serbian Despot against another Serb noble, George Brankovitch. They were competitive parasites of the Sultan's court and each led the half of a rent people. Definite victory was impossible, they both lived on in an undignified compromise ; only Kosovo was the richer, and that by many graves. Forty-five years later the conditions of defeat had so thickened that, though there was another battle of Kosovo, the Serbs could not fight. They, who of all peoples feel the least reluctance to fighting, had to stand inactive on the field where it was natural they should determine their fate.

Now another George Brankovitch, nephew of the first, was Despot of a diminished Serbia ; he joined with the famous John Hunyadi, a Roumanian in the service of Hungary, and King Vladislav of Poland, and they formed a great expedition to recover Serbia and Bulgaria from the Turks. Bulgaria could not be saved, but Serbia came into full freedom. A solemn treaty was signed by all the belligerents, binding the Hungarian and the Poles to stay on their side of the Danube and the Sultan to stay on his, and giving George Brankovitch the whole of Serbia, as well as returning to him his two sons, who had been captured and blinded by the Turks. But as the Turks were then being attacked in Asia Minor it seemed to the Pope that this was the right time to drive them out of Europe, and he sent an army under the Cardinal Julian Cesarini to urge the Christian forces to take up arms again. When they protested that they had just signed a treaty pledging themselves to peace, the Cardinal told them that it is lawful for Christians to set aside and break an oath made with an infidel.

The peculiar flavour of the Western Church lies strong on the tongue in that declaration. George Brankovitch refused to join the Poles and Hungarians in availing himself of this license to perfidy. It is easy to explain this by pointing out that he had done better out of the treaty than the other signatories ; but the fact remains that, although such a ruling would have been a great advantage to the Christian subjects of Turkey, at no time during their enslavement did the Eastern Church encourage them to cast away their honour. Therefore George Brankovitch stood by while the Catholic armies advanced on the Turks at Varna in Bulgaria, whose Sultan prayed as they came, " Oh, Christ, if Thou art God, as thy followers say, punish their perfidy." His prayer was answered. Both the King of Hungary and the Cardinal fell on the field, with most of their soldiers. But the war dragged on with interruptions for another four years, and came to an end here on Kossovo, in a battle that lasted for three days and gave the plain about fifty thousand more dead. By this time the Serbs were demoralised by the division of the Christian world and by comradeship with their pagan enemies, and it is said that they waited on the hills around the plain till the battle ended and they could rob the dead.

So in the first battle of Kossovo the Serbs learned the meaning of defeat, not such defeat as forms a necessary proportion

of all effort, for in that they had often been instructed during the course of their history, but of total defeat, annihilation of their corporate will and all their individual wills. The second battle of Kossovo taught them that one may live on such a low level of existence that even defeat cannot be achieved. The third taught them that even that level is not the lowest, and that there is a limbo for subject peoples where there is neither victory nor defeat but abortions which, had they come to birth, would have become such states. There was to be yet a fourth battle which was to prove still another horrible lesson. Very shortly after the third battle, in 1453, Byzantium fell; and the Turks were able to concentrate on the task of mastering the Balkans. The Serbs were constrained not to resist them by their fear of the Roman Catholic powers, who venomously loathed them and the Bulgarians for their fidelity to the Eastern Church and their liability to the Bogomil heresy. The night fell for four centuries, limbo became Hell, and manifested the anarchy that is Hell's essential character.

It happened that the Slavs who had become Janissaries, especially the Bosnian Serbs, who had been taken from their Christian mothers and trained to forswear Christ and live in the obedience and enforcement of the oppressive yet sluttish Ottoman law, had learned their lesson too well. When the Turks themselves became alarmed by the working of that law and attempted to reform it, the Janissaries rose against the reformation. But because they remembered they were Slavs in spite of all the efforts that had been made to force them to forget it, they felt that in resisting the Turks, even in defence of Turkish law, they were resisting those who had imposed that Turkish law on them in place of their Christian system. So when the rebellious Janissaries defeated the loyal army of the Sultan in the fourth battle of Kossovo in 1831, and left countless Turkish dead on the field, they held that they had avenged the shame laid on the Christian Slavs in the first battle of Kossovo, although they themselves were Moslems. But their Christian fellow-Slavs gave them no support, for they regarded them simply as co-religionists of the Turkish oppressors and therefore as enemies. So the revolt of the Janissaries failed; and to add the last touch of confusion, they were finally defeated by a Turkish marshal who was neither Turk nor Moslem-born Slav, but a renegade Roman Catholic from Dalmatia.

Here was illustrated what is often obscured by historians, that a people can be compelled by misfortune into an existence so confused that it is not life but sheer nonsense, the malignant nonsense of cancerous growth.

Kossovo speaks only of its defeats. It is true that they were nullified by the Serbs of Serbia, who snatched their own liberty from the Turks under the leadership of Karageorge and Milosh Obrenovitch in the early nineteenth century, and pressed on, against the hostility of the great powers, until they gave liberty to Old Serbia and Macedonia in the Balkan wars. But of this triumph Kossovo says nothing, for the battle which gave it to the Serbs in 1912 was fought not there but at Kumanovo, some miles to the south-east ; and even after that it knew defeat again, for here the retreating Serbian Army was bombed by German aeroplanes as they fled towards the Albanian border, and though they pursued their enemies across it when they returned three years later it was without spectacular event. Here is the image of failure, so vast that it fills the eye as failure sometimes fills an individual life, an epoch.

The white church we found had been built to celebrate the recovery of the lost land, by a society of patriotic Serbian women. Inside it many plaques of thanksgiving, ardent beyond the habit of inscriptions, hung on the whitewashed walls, and outside it, darkened by its short noonday shadow, there lay the grave of this society's president who, her headstone said, had worked all her life long to fire her countrymen with the ambition to free their enslaved brothers, and had expressed with her last breath the desire to be buried within sight of Kossovo. As we stood beside the cross two little boys came out of a white house lying under us on the Kossovo side of the hill, caught sight of us, and stalked us, as though it were we who were wild and shy, not they. They moved in circles about us through the long grass and paused at last about ten yards away, their thumbs in their mouths, their eyes like little dark tunnels down to their animal natures.

Constantine called out, " Little ones ! little ones ! " and charmed them to him, step by step ; and when they were still some feet away they told him that the white house was an orphanage, founded by the same patriotic society, and that they were all alone there, because they were too young to go to school. It would not be in accordance with our Western ideas that two

boys, hardly more than babies, should be left in an orphanage for a morning by themselves, or that they should be barefoot ; but they looked quite uninstitutionalised and very healthy and serene. Very likely there was here a wise Slav disorder, as in the sanatorium in Croatia, that allowed human processes to develop according to their unpredictable design. When Constantine's enchantments had brought the children to his side, he asked them, " Why was the orphanage built here ? " and they answered him in a tender and infantile version of official oratory, touching as the flags and wreaths used for a patriotic celebration in a very little village. They spoke of the glorious ancient Serbian Empire, of its shameful destruction by the Turks at Kossovo, of the agonising captivity that lasted five centuries, of the liberation offered through courage by the Serbian people, and the founding of Yugoslavia, that should be as glorious as ancient Serbia. " And do you know," asked Constantine, " the songs that our people have sung about the terrible day of St. Vitus ? " They began at once, with the inexhaustible, almost rank verbal memory of the Slav child :

" Musitch Stephen his cool wine was drinking,  
In his palace, rich with purest silver,  
In his beautiful and lordly dwelling ;  
And his servant Vaistina poured it,  
When of his cool wine he had drunk deeply,  
Then said Musitch Stephen to his servant :  
' Vaistina, thou my child beloved,  
I will lay me down a while to slumber.  
Drink some wine and eat some supper,  
Then walk before my lordly palace,  
Look upon the clear night sky and tell me,  
If the silver moon is sinking westward,  
If the morning star is shining eastward,  
If the time has come for us to travel  
To the fair and level Plain of Blackbirds.' "

The little boys looked noble and devout as they recited. Here was the nationalism which the intellectuals of my age agreed to consider a vice and the origin of the world's misfortunes. I cannot imagine why. Every human being is of sublime value, because his experience, which must be in some measure unique, gives him a unique view of reality, and the sum of such views should go far to giving us the complete picture of reality,

which the human race must attain if it is ever to comprehend its destiny. Therefore every human being must be encouraged to cultivate his consciousness to the fullest degree. It follows that every nation, being an association of human beings who have been drawn together by common experience, has also its unique view of reality, which must contribute to our deliverance, and should therefore be allowed a like encouragement to its consciousness. Let people, then, hold to their own language, their own customs, their own beliefs, even if this inconveniences the tourist. There is not the smallest reason for confounding nationalism, which is the desire of a people to be itself, with imperialism, which is the desire of a people to prevent other peoples from being themselves. Intense nationalist spirit is often, indeed, an effort by a people to rebuild its character when an imperialist power has worked hard to destroy it. Finnish nationalism, for example, is a blood transfusion given after the weakening wounds inflicted by Tsarist Russia, and it is accompanied by defensive but not aggressive feelings in relation to its neighbours. Here certainly I could look without any reservation on the scene, on the two little boys darkening their brows in imitation of the heroes as they spoke the stern verse, on Constantine, whose Jewish eyes were full of Serbian tears, on my husband who bent over the children with the hieratic reverence Englishmen feel for boyhood that has put its neck under the yoke of discipline, on the green bed and stone cross of the happy grave, on the domes of the native church, and the hospitable farm-like orphanage. This was as unlikely to beget any ill as the wild roses and meadowsweets we had gathered by the road.

The scene was exquisite ; but it was pitifully without weight, without mass, compared to the plain that spread for forty miles before us, thickened by tragedy. If a giant had taken Kossovo in his right hand and us and the church and the farmhouse and the grave in his left hand, his right hand must have fallen to his side because of the heaviness of the load, but it would have seemed to him that in his left hand there was nothing but a little dust. It is flattery of nature to say that it is indifferent to man. It grossly disfavours him in quantity and quality, providing more pain than pleasure, and making that more potent. The simplest and most dramatic example is found in our food : a good oyster cannot please the palate as acutely as a bad one can revolt it, and a good oyster cannot make him who eats it

live for ever though a bad one can make him dead for ever. The agony of Kossovo could not be balanced by the joy that was to be derived from it. The transports of the women who built the church must dull themselves in continuance, and even if they generated the steady delight of founding a new nation that itself was dulled by the resistance offered to the will by material objects, and by the conflict between different wills working to the same end, which is often not less envenomed than the conflict between wills working to different ends. But the agony of Kossovo must have been purely itself, pain upon pain, newly born in acuteness for each generation, throughout five centuries. The night of evil had been supreme, it still was supreme on a quantitative basis.

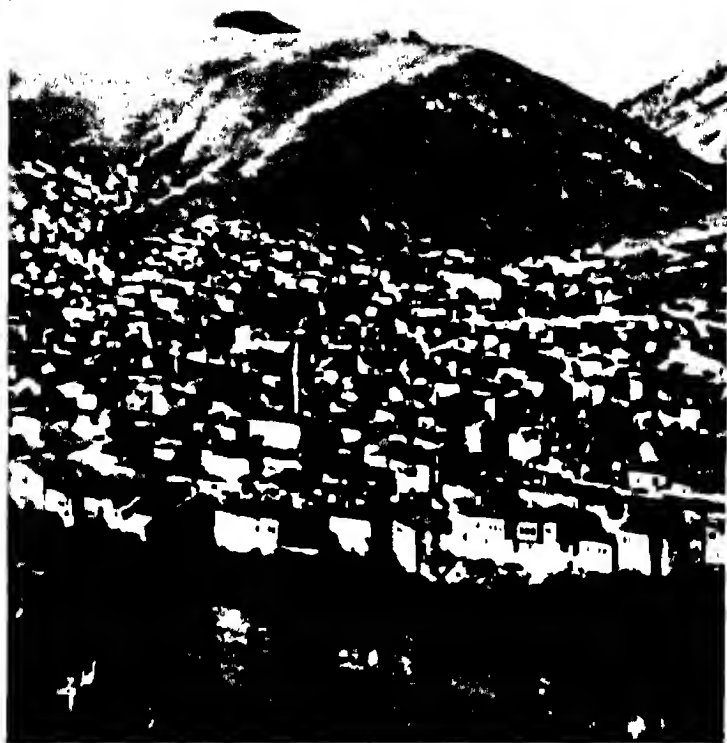
Above the plain were the soft white castles of the clouds and a blank blue wall behind them. Into this world I had been born and I must resign myself to it; I could not move myself to a fortunate planet, where any rare tear was instantly dried by a benediction. This is my glass, I must drink out of it. In my anxiety to know what was in the glass, I wondered, "The world is tragic, but just how tragic? I wonder if it is finally so, if we can ever counter the catastrophes to which we are liable and give ourselves a workshop of serenity in which we can experiment with that other way of life which is not tragedy, but which is not comedy. Certainly not comedy, for that is merely life before tragedy has fallen upon it, ridiculous as a clown on the films who grins and capers without seeing that there is a policeman behind him just about to bring down a club on his head. That other way of life must transcend not only comedy but tragedy, must refuse to be impressed by its grandiose quality and frustrate it at every point."

But I found my mind wandering from the subject, which was surely the nature of tragedy and the points at which it attacked man, to indulge in some of that optimism which serves us in the West instead of fortitude. Life, I said to myself, was surely not as tragic as all that, and perhaps the defeat of Kossovo had not been a disaster of supreme magnitude. Perhaps the armies that had stood up before the Turks had been a huddle of barbarians, impressive only after the fashion of a pack of wolves, that in its dying presented the world with only the uninteresting difference between a live pack of wolves and a dead pack of wolves. That is a view held by some historians,



notably the person so unfortunately selected by the editors of the *Cambridge Medieval History* to write the chapter on the Serbian Empire ; and it seems to receive some support when one drives, as we did after we left the church, along the fringes of the plain. The population of Old Serbia is sunk far deeper in misery than the Macedonians, and at a superficial glance they justify the poor opinion of the Christian rayahs held by nineteenth-century travellers. Their houses turn a dilapidated blankness on the village street ; their clothes are often dirty and unornamented by a single stitch of embroidery ; and they gape at the stranger with eyes empty of anything but a lethargic fear which is quite unapposite to the present, which is the residue of a deposit left by a past age, never yet drained off by the intelligence.

Actually I knew that there were many reasons why these women should be so, other than the predisposition of their stock. They were not a fair specimen of the Slav population as it had been at the time of the battle of Kossovo, for most of the noble families had died on the field, and the cream of what were left emigrated to Austrian territory within the next three hundred years. Such as were left suffered from all the disadvantages of Turkish rule without enjoying any of the advantages that had made the ruin of Macedonia so far from absolute. It had no rich capital like Bitolj, nor such trading centres as Skoplje, Veles, Tetovo and Gostivar ; and it had no picturesqueness to tempt wealthy Turks to build country houses. It was purely agricultural land. The Turks raped it of its crops and sent them back to Constantinople, and took the peasants' last farthing in taxes, and gave nothing in return. This plain might have blossomed like the rose with civilisation and nothing would have remained. It was also probable, in view of the falsity of the face a house and a peasant turn on the world, that these women were not as they seemed. But for this moment I looked on them idiotically, as if I were Gerda, imputing to them worthlessness instead of difference ; and I alleged to myself that probably nothing had fallen at Kossovo that was an irreparable loss, that perhaps tragedy draws blood but never life-blood.



VELES SEEN FROM CHURCH



GRACHANITSA

*Grachanitsa I*

But I could not keep that up for long. It happens that there stands on the plain of Kossovo, some miles south of the actual battle-field, a building which demonstrates what sort of civilisation fell with the Serbs. It proves it as no nationalist rhetoric could hope to do, it leaves no room for differences of opinion, for it is a chunk of the Nemanyan Empire, irrefutable testimony to its quality. We drove along the straight road, through low-spirited villages, past herds and flocks, all of them ornery, plain ornery, and slouching peasants, so few that the land was almost empty as the sky; and we turned into a lane leading towards the hills, through fields whose crops were smothered by those aromatic flowers which are half-way to being scrub. I would fear to say that it was not rich ground, but it is being reclaimed after centuries of avid and ignorant farming, and the effect is destitution. There was no sufficiency anywhere save in the scented handsome sprawl of honeysuckle in the hedges. Then, across a field grey-green with the young maize, we saw a settlement of smallish farms lying among low trees, and in the midst of them a rose-red dome upheld by four lesser domes of the same warm and transparent colour. These made, as the dominant shape of a religious building should do, a reference to the reality which lies above the world of appearances, to the order which transcends the disorder of events.

Even from this distance it could be seen that Grachanitsa was as religious a building as Chartres Cathedral; though it made a simpler and smaller statement, the thought and feeling behind it were as complex, and the sublime subject matter was the same. But it was as if Chartres Cathedral should stand alone on a land that has been shorn of all that was France when it was built and has been France since then; with no Paris, no Sorbonne, no Académie Française, in fact not a single modern representation of the culture that built the cathedral, and not a single trace within miles of the well-being that affords a physical basis for this culture, not a plump chicken, nor a pound of butter, nor a bottle of good wine, nor a comfortable mattress. Such spectacles are commonplace in Africa or Asia or America, which have their Pyramids and Angkor Vat and Inca memorials, but in Europe we are not accustomed to them. Our forms of

historic tragedy have blotted a paragraph here and there, but they have rarely torn out the leaves of a whole volume, letting only a coloured frontispiece remain to tease us. Of Grachanitsa, however, catastrophe has left us nothing but Grachanitsa.

At the moment when we reached the church its ruin of surroundings was emphasised by attempts to repair it. Grachanitsa lies in a bare enclosure shaded by a few trees, pitifully different from the gardens that surround the mosques of its conquerors, with their fountains and conduited waters and marble seats. It was now stacked with heaps of masonry, and on the further side a half-finished building stood among its scaffolding; and on benches in the shadow of the church twenty or thirty young soldiers sat at a meal, while an officer stood beside them, talking to a tall white-bearded priest and a man in townish clothes. They turned to look at us, and the man in townish clothes clapped his hands and ran towards us, crying, "Constantine! Constantine!" "You see, he knows me, all people know me," said Constantine, as he always did in such circumstances, but without his usual vivacity. Formerly he said it as if he could remember the exact taste of the pleasure he had shared with his friend; but it was now as if he could think of it only as a payment from a fortune he had exhausted. "He is a very well-known architect from Belgrade," he explained. "I know all such people. No doubt he is in charge of the new building, whatever it is."

That this was so the architect explained, clinging happily to Constantine's coat lapels. He was putting up a new guest-house, which was needed because the monastery was so miserably poor and wanted a new opportunity to raise funds. Tens of thousands of pilgrims come here every year on St. Virus' Day, the anniversary of the battle of Kossovo. There could be, of course, no question of housing all of them. These pilgrims, who would be half rosy with Bank-Holidayness and half agonised by the contemplation of the national tragedy, would continue to sleep on the summer-baked soil of the fields, as they had always done. The plan was to catch the few pounds now spent by the richer peasants at the inn at Prishtina, which is the nearest town. The architect went on, speaking French for our benefit, "And it is the greatest joy to be here, for I have some little things to do also for the marvel, the pearl, the church itself. Look at her!

"It has been a wonderful thing for me to work here, because in Belgrade one forgets what one's people is, what paprika we really are. Look at this old monk here. You know, when I first came here, I had some hope of persuading the Abbot and the monks and their Bishop to let me take off the porch, for I knew that if they consented the Government would permit it. So I told them what a shame it was not to have Grachanitsa in its beauty as it was when King Milutin founded it, but they would not listen to me, and perhaps they had a little of the right on their side, for indeed the porch is historically interesting. It was built when the Turks in theory prohibited all building of Christian churches or repairing of them, and the reason it could be done is romantic. A member of the Sokolovitch family who had been taken by the Turks when a child to be a Janissary had become the Grand Vizier, and he used his position to protect all Serbs, and in particular to grant any favour asked him by his brother, who was a priest and whom he had appointed Patriarch of Petch. But I am an architect and not a historian, and I became very angry when the monks would not grant me my wish. I turned my back on them and walked out of the room where we were, and I came out here and sat on the stone seat that runs along the wall of the church, fuming and kicking the pebbles in front of me. Presently this old one with the white beard came out and told me that they felt I had better know at once that if I came by night and did what I wanted to the porch they would get me excommunicated. The brave old one, he belongs to the days of comitadji and smuggled rifles and bombs and night raids, and that is the way he thought life was conducted, particularly by people who are angry. And indeed that is a way not inappropriate to this place, for it is fierce, very fierce, as you will see when you go inside. There you will see, if you have eyes in your head, that we were not barbarians, yet very fierce."

He halted us again as we crossed the dust towards the church. "No, certainly we were not barbarians," he said. "Look, look at her. Nothing about her is accidental. She is built not out of simplicity but out of the extremest sophistication. She is full of tricks, so elaborate that I can hardly explain them to those who are not trained architects. The towers supporting those cupolas are pulled out of their proper axes by somebody who knows — and it is unbelievable what theory and practice

one would have to have mastered before one could know it — that thus there could be achieved an effect of airy lightness. Ah, but what this builder knew. Think of it, there is water, and much water, under this ground. At one point it lies within three feet of the walls. But he was calm, he was sure of his knowledge. I would not dare to build a building of such a size and importance so near water. He dared, and he was right in his daring, for after six hundred years the church is lying level as she was built, and she is not an inch nearer the water. Such things barbarians cannot do at all, such things hardly any of the cultured races have been able to do." There was evidence of the unfortunate position of the Balkans in his realisation that we had probably doubted the value of the culture which Kossovo had destroyed. "But you must go inside. The interior of Grachanitsa tells you all about the people who built her."

That was true ; and what it told us was, to our surprise, not unfamiliar. From the immense height of the cupolas light descends on three naves, divided by gigantesquely sturdy columns, and arrives there multicoloured, dyed by the frescoes which cover every inch of the walls. There is here a sense of colossal strength, of animal vigour, of lust so lusty that it can sup off high pleasures as well as low, and likes crimson on its eye as well as wine on its tongue, and a godhead as well as a mistress. In fact, here is something very like the spirit of the late Tudor age ; and this is the kind of church that the architects of Hampton Court might have built if the Gothic obsession had not laid its hand on their end of Europe. This was a startling correspondence, because the Serbian king who built Grachanitsa some seventy years before the battle of Kossovo closely resembled our Henry VIII.

This was King Milutin. In the twelfth century the Neman-yas, a family of chieftains who lived in a petty fortress on the Montenegrin border near the Adriatic coastline, produced a genius in the person of St. Sava and a man of great talent in his brother, King Stephen the First-crowned, who together founded a stable Christian Serbian state, which their descendants expanded north towards the Danube, east towards the Vardar river, and south into Byzantine territory. When the dynasty had been under way about a hundred and fifty years Milutin came to the throne, and in himself and his royal func-

tions his likeness to Henry VIII was very strong.

He worked marvels for his country, but was untender to many of his subjects. He hungered hotly for women, but was cold as ice when he discarded them or used them as political instruments. He was ardently devout, but used his religion as a counter in his international relationships without showing a sign of scruple. There is a robustness in him that charms from the yonder side of the grave, but without doubt his vitals were eaten by the worm of melancholy. His picture is among the frescoes here. He stands, deeply bearded, in the costume worn by Serbian royalty, which is clearly imitated from the Byzantine mode: a stiff tunic of rich material studded with jewels, which disregards the frailty of the enclosed flesh and constrains it to magnificence. That costume powerfully recalls the later Tudor portraits, the gorgeous robes that held together the grossness of Henry VIII and the brain-raddled emaciation of Elizabeth and presented them as massive monarchs. Such vestments speak of a world founded on the idea of status, which regarded a king as the beloved deputy of God, not because he was any particular sort of man, but because it was considered obvious that if he were crowned a king he would try to act like a beloved deputy of God, since society had agreed that was how a king should act. There stands beside him, equally sumptuous, his wife Simonis, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II. She was Milutin's fourth wife. He had had to work up to her, earning the right through a long life to avenge an early disappointment.

Of that disappointment we read in the writings of a contemporary who was on the side of those who inflicted it. Pachymeres, the Byzantine historian, relates that the Byzantine Emperor Michael Palaeologus wished for an alliance with King Stephen Urosh of Serbia, and to that end offered his second daughter, Anna, as wife to King Stephen's second son, who was this same Milutin. Michael's wife, who was not only Empress but a great lady by birth, had a poor opinion of this proposal, and before the bride and her train started she sent some officials and a bishop as scouts to see if the Serbian court was fit for her daughter. Their adventures were sad. They were shocked by what seemed to them the poverty of the land; and for some reason this invariably happened in the Middle Ages when anybody visited any country other than his



own, and Byzantines were liable to receive this unfavourable impression with peculiar poignancy. There was an authentic reason for this which held good over a long period. For hundreds of years their standard of living was higher than in most other countries, so much higher that when one of their ladies went to Venice to be the wife of the Doge Selvio in the eleventh century, the luxury of her habits, which included eating with a gold fork and wearing gloves, led her to be regarded as fit for Hell. But later, when this superiority was nothing like so marked, the Byzantines grew soft and insular and complaining, like a certain type of well-to-do English person who grumbles at French coffee, at American trains, at German bedclothes, to a degree far beyond what is justified by the amount of irritation these can cause in the sane. The Byzantine emissaries evidently belonged to this class, for they reported that the Serbians subsisted solely on what they brought down hunting and what they stole ; but it is known that at that time they conducted a lively trade in timber and livestock and wheat and oil, that there were several rich mines, and that the organisation of artisans set up by the Romans still flourished.

The insularity of these Byzantines was further alarmed when they came on a manifestation of the West with which they were unfamiliar. King Stephen Urosh was married to a French princess, Hélène of Anjou, who was a Roman Catholic zealot of an austere type. She is said to have been an admirable woman of great benevolence and intelligence, who did much excellent work in restoring the lands which had been laid waste by the Mongols, but she practised that extreme type of Catholic asceticism which is the root of Puritanism. Under her influence her elder son, Dragutin, who was a cripple, formed a habit of sleeping in a grave lined with thorns and sharp flints. Her husband, although he remained within the Orthodox Church, was governed by her ideas. When the officials and the Bishop arrived at his palace he received them coldly, and on hearing that they were part of Princess Anna's train and that many more were following, he said sourly that he was sorry to hear it, for he and his family were not accustomed to such luxury. Then in a spirit with which we are all familiar, particularly if we were young before the war, he took them to see the wife of his elder son Dragutin, who was the daughter of the King of Hungary. She was plainly dressed and was spinning

wool. "Now that," said King Stephen, "is the sort of wife that we like here." The touch can be recognised by those of us who were brought up on relays of princesses who were all but dropping dead under the continuous effort of public simplicity, who wore shirt-blouses unusual for gauntness, who had no fires in their bedrooms, who went to bed so early that, even allowing for the early hour at which they rose, their slumbers must have been inordinate.

But the Byzantines did not understand. Leaving a bad impression behind them by their obvious perturbation, they rode back hastily and stopped the Princess at Ochrid. Not certain what to do, whether to take her straight back to Constantinople or wait for orders or let her go on and be recalled, they hung about the district till there arrived a Serbian ambassador named in the chronicles George, simple George. He seems to have been a person of great resource. He had plainly been sent to discourage the expedition from proceeding, since the Serbian court had liked the Byzantine emissaries as little as they had liked it. He began by telling them that on the way he had been robbed, and they naturally asked themselves what mercy they as foreigners could expect from robbers who did not spare notables of their own country. George also started a conversation in ambiguous terms which led them to question him sharply as to whether the conditions of the marriage contract to be signed between Michael Palaeologus and Stephen Urosh were likely to be faithfully observed. He answered with transparent evasiveness. And in the night the Byzantine emissaries' horses were stolen. They found the local police unhelpful in the search for them, though ready enough to provide extremely inferior substitutes. Princess Anna and her train left in haste for home.

This incident cannot have pleased Milutin, though he probably liked the bit about the horses. He had a marked distaste for his family's ideas. Simplicity he abhorred, and throughout his life he showed that Roman Catholicism was to him simply a means of winning the support of a man called the Pope who exercised an enviable amount of power. He worked to become inarguably great, in terms that would be understood across a continent, that would be understood even by gorgeous Byzantium. There was a certain amount of preliminary waiting to be done, while his family life broke into curious blooms. His

pious elder brother Dragutin rebelled against his father King Stephen, with the help of his brother-in-law, King Ladislas IV of Hungary, beat him thoroughly in a great battle in Herzegovina, and seized the throne for himself. He was so completely under his Roman Catholic mother's influence that it cannot be doubted she was in sympathy with his revolt, which they both probably justified by Stephen Urosh's fidelity to the Orthodox Church, although King Ladislas, a notorious scoundrel descended from an unlovable Asiatic tribe, was an odd ally in a Holy War. When Dragutin had won he threw his father into prison and proceeded to manœuvre his country towards the abandonment of the Orthodox Church and conversion to Roman Catholicism. These plots were detected and resented by his people, and after he and King Ladislas had made an unsuccessful attempt on Byzantine territory, for which he had to make amends by the surrender of a large tract of Serbian land, he abdicated in favour of Milutin. He then settled in Bosnia, which his Hungarian wife had brought him in her dowry, became a Roman Catholic, and asked the Pope to send him a mission of Franciscan friars to convert the Bogomil heretics and the members of the Orthodox Church within his territory. Thus there was initiated the period of savage religious persecution which made the distracted Bosnians prefer Islam to Roman Catholicism, and enabled the Turk to entrench himself in a key position in South-East Europe. This was a truly lamentable rascal.

When Milutin ascended the throne he felt under no necessity to set his father free. He, a Lear who really had something to worry about, died in an Albanian prison a year later. Thereafter Serbia prospered steadily, for no other apparent reason than that Milutin was a fortunate ruler, like a garden whose owner has the "green finger". The mines gave up their riches, wine and wheat and oil and livestock flowed out of the country in a fat river of well-being. Abroad, he carried on a continuous policy of expansion at his neighbour's weakest points. He ate southwards into the disordered Byzantine Empire, his first marriage helping him. He had married the daughter of Duke John of Neopatras, the most powerful of the despots who were setting up for themselves here and there on the Greek Islands in defiance of Constantinople. Then Byzantium sent the Tartars against Milutin, and on the plea of consolidating his position in the West he sent Duke John's daughter packing, quite in

the manner of Henry VIII, and married Elizabeth, the sister of Dragutin's wife and his old ally, the Asiatic King Ladislas of Hungary. But this new marriage was remarkable for the number of ways in which it was bound to displease people. The Roman Catholics outside and inside the Serbian Empire were scandalised, not only because Milutin was divorced but because the bride was a nun. The members of the Orthodox Church were equally scandalised because she was the sister of Milutin's brother's wife, thus falling within the prohibited degrees. She was also unpopular with Milutin's party because she was Hungarian, and the alliance between Dragutin and her brother had meant a defeat for Serbia and the loss of territory. It is impossible to believe that this marriage can have secured more support for him than it lost, and that the motive was not passion. One must compare it to Henry's impolitic and impassioned marriage with Anne Boleyn. It resembled it too in brevity. Before long Milutin dismissed her and married Anna Terteri, the daughter of George Terteri, a fierce and able Emperor of Bulgaria, who was part Slav, part Asiatic. East and West found it not at all impossible to meet in South-East Europe after the barbarian invasions.

But soon Anna also was dismissed. Under Milutin's government Serbia had become so rich and his disingenuous statesmanship so notoriously successful that the Byzantine Empire regarded its power with alarm. But the Turks, massing decade by decade in Asia Minor, were a graver danger. So the Emperor Andronicus II, who had succeeded his father Michael Palaeologus, signed a treaty of peace with Milutin, and offered to seal it with the hand of his widowed sister Eudocia. This offer could not have been made unless Milutin had composed a masterly fantasia on legalist themes comparable to Henry VIII's divorce of Katherine of Aragon. On the face of it Milutin could not marry anybody, because the canon law of the Orthodox Church definitely forbids fourth marriages. But Milutin overcame that difficulty. He now claimed that his first divorce had been illegal. In support of this he brought it forward that the Orthodox Church officials would never permit the name of his second queen to be mentioned in the liturgy, though the real reason for this had been that she was connected to him within the prohibited degrees. This pretence that his first divorce had been invalid meant that not only his

second but his third wife had never been really married to him, and that their children were all bastards. That did not distress him, for though he had two sons who were affected by this decision, a mere heir was not what he wanted. He wanted an heir who should have a title through himself to the Serbian crown and through his mother to one of the Byzantine crowns. Also there was at last to be won revenge for the sneers of Michael Palaeologus' eunuchs, sent to see if he were a fit bridegroom for Princess Anna. The precise moment had arrived when he could pursue these ends because his first wife, the very first of all, had died ; and although the Orthodox Church looks on the remarriage of widows and widowers hardly more favourably than if they had been parted from their spouses by divorce, now that he had succeeded in wiping out his second and third marriages, the one he contemplated counted as only his second, and he was free to make it after performing a slight penance.

The Emperor's sister Eudocia, however, refused this opportunity. She put in the alternative pleas that she dearly loved the memory of her husband and would not for the world marry again, and that when she married again she wanted a more respectable bridegroom than Milutin. For public opinion was profoundly shocked by his matrimonial casuistics. It is to be noted, however, that there is nothing in Milutin's reign comparable to the beheading of Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard. In certain respects Milutin was far more civilised than Henry VIII, though he lived a hundred and fifty years earlier in a country that had been Christianised three hundred years later. Few would care to say that Henry VIII might not have forgotten the duties of filial piety if he had had an energetic mother who led a campaign against all his divorces, and never ceased to act as a Roman Catholic propagandist in both his own realm and neighbouring territories. But although Hélène of Anjou denounced all Milutin's marriages but the first, and not only supported her Roman Catholic son in Bosnia on the western frontier of Serbia, but tried to convert the Emperor of Bulgaria on its east, she outlived Milutin. We know also what happened to Sir Thomas More ; better luck attended the Archbishop Jacob, who was fearless in his opposition to Milutin's tortuous matrimonial policy, yet lost neither his life nor his archiepiscopate. Still, sufficient unto the day was Milutin's barbarity. It was in sorrow and shame that the Emperor Andronicus resolved

to buy Serbian adherence at a higher price than he had meant to pay. Since his sister Eudocia refused to be sacrificed he had to offer up his daughter Simonis, who was only six years old.

Their services are insufficiently recognised, those girl children who held together the fabric of history by leaving their nurseries and going into far lands to experience the pains of rape and miscarriage, among strangers talking unknown tongues and practising unhomely customs. The practice has not been so long in desuetude that we can despise it as a remote barbarity ; it was thought a pity that the Belgian Princess who married the Crown Prince Rudolph of Hapsburg had not shown the signs of womanhood at the time fixed for her wedding, but the ceremony was not for that reason postponed. Nor is it necessary, in order to feel its horror, to exaggerate the infamy of early sexual activity ; it is sheer humbug to pretend that a girl of twelve who is married to a kindly young bridegroom is in worse case than a woman in her forties, of the kind that would like to marry, who is not married. If child marriage were as fearful as the modern world pretends, the white race would be extinct by now. Erasmus declared in a sermon that, though it was usual for little girls of ten to marry and straightway have children, he himself thought it too young ; and our own Henry VII was born of a thirteen-year-old mother who lived to be a vigorous woman with scholarly interests.

But the export trade in these little princesses was indubitably and totally repulsive. For a child-wife to be happy she must have a gentle husband of her own kith, and familiar faces round her when she comes to childbirth. But these royal children were sent out into strange lands, not to see their kinsfolk again for years and perhaps for ever, to be handed over to men who would not have been able to compel such precious gifts if they had not proved themselves bloody in mind and deed. Often such marriages marked the signature of peace between powers that had been savagely at war, so that little girls were sent to the beds of enemies who had been the Bluebeards of their nursery tales. Every child in the Byzantine Empire in the thirteenth century must have shuddered at nights to think of the Tartars, the little yellow men that passed over the land like living flames from hell. But when Michael Palaeologus needed the support of the Tartars against the Bulgars, he sent superb presents to their chief, Prince Chalaii. There was chosen as

Ambassador the priest and Abbot of the monastery of Christ Ruler of All, who took with him, among much else, a portable altar, screened with magnificent curtains and embellished with images of the saints and with a superbly worked cross, and furnished with costly chalices and plates for the celebration of the mysteries ; and also an illegitimate daughter of the Emperor called Euphrosyne who had been promised to the Tartar chief as his bride. She was well under ten years of age. When the train arrived at the South Russian camp of the Tartars it was found that Prince Chalaii was dead, so his son Nogai married her instead. The bridegroom looked curiously at the pearls on the Byzantine bonnets of her suite and guessed them to be charms against thunder. Nothing is known of Euphrosyne's later life save that one of her sons was strangled in some convulsion of Bulgarian politics. Michael Palaeologus had another illegitimate daughter, Marya, whom he sent even further afield on the same sort of errand. She went to marry the Khan of Tartary who lived at Baghdad, a grandson of Genghis Khan. It is to be remembered that these Asian invaders were as shocking to that age as they are to this, for in spite of the greater social violence of the Middle Ages there was a stricter chivalry observed in war. No prisoner was put to death or held to ransom unless he was royal or noble, captured common soldiers were disarmed and turned loose, and there was no killing save in actual battle. A society which held this code would plainly be appalled as we are by the Tartars' massacre of millions and their destruction of all property and disregard for all human rights in the territories they ravaged. It is not to be believed that Euphrosyne and Marya were unafraid, either as children or as grown women.

So Simonis, for a little girl born to a lofty place in the hierarchy of Byzantium, was not faring so badly ; but she fared ill enough. A historian of her day has described the manner of her going out to her martyrdom. It was at the beginning of Lent that the Emperor Andronicus left Constantinople to take her to Milutin. There had been a long and cruel winter which had killed many trees and plants. The land was still under snow and the rivers were frozen. The imperial train travelled slowly towards Salonica, halting sometimes to attend to local matters of state. One night they stayed at the monastery where the Patriarch had his residence, and in the morning all attended Mass. Afterwards the Patriarch tried to rebuke the Emperor

for the scandal of the marriage and asked if he might talk to *Simonis* about it. But *Andronicus* with the curtness which is the weak man's substitute for strength, told him they must be on their way, asked him to give himself and his daughter the benediction, and set out on the northward journey through the frozen country. Later he wrote to the Patriarch and told him that he would not take Communion from his hands at Easter, according to custom. The task must be deputed to another priest. But at the same time he sent him the present of a thousand crowns which it was his habit to send him at that season.

His heart must have been heavy as he rode away from the monastery, for he knew well that the Patriarch was right. And the little girl was very dear to him, for she had been born after he had been greatly grieved by the loss of several other daughters in their infancy. Her name recorded his concern for her, since it was given her by reason of a magical device he had practised lest she should lose her like her sisters. When she was born twelve candles of equal size and weight were lit before the images of the Twelve Apostles, and while these were burning prayers were said for the child, and she was put under the protection of the saint whose candle lasted longest. It was St. Simon who preserved her life, for the curious end that at the age of six she should be handed over to a bridegroom some forty years her senior who was, by consummating their marriage too soon, to render her barren. Yet *Andronicus* cannot be blamed. Over the sea, in Asia Minor, there were massing Turks, and more Turks, and yet more Turks, surpassing the Mongols in dreadfulness because of the reinforcement of their ferocity by persistence, in their stabilisation of massacre by settlement. There was nothing a Christian king could do but swallow the vices of other Christian kings if they were possible allies in the defence of Europe against the Ottoman invaders.

At a gorgeous festival in Salonica the child and *Milutin* were married by the Archbishop of Ochrid; and hidden behind the crowds and the banners and the trumpeters and the processions of soldiers and eunuchs a second sombre and infestive ceremony took place. Two people were handed over to the Emperor *Andronicus* as some compensation for the loss of his daughter. One was a Byzantine deserter who had of late very successfully led King *Milutin's* troops against certain towns



on the fringe of the Emperor's territory : Milutin had his Wolsey. The other was the daughter of the Bulgarian Emperor Terteri, till lately Milutin's wife. She was to be filed for reference with Andronicus, to be brought out or forgotten as political expediency was served. Hardly less than the bride she proved to what a limited degree it is possible, without falling into the most savage irony, to describe women as the protected sex. It is said that Milutin showed so little compunction in discarding her because her father had lately been driven from the Bulgarian throne : but he had been succeeded by her brother. For women, however, blood is constantly as thin as water, and nobody seems to have anticipated that her family would come to her defence.

Later Simonis was to face for some time the destiny of her predecessor. She was to survive Milutin, as Katherine Parr survived Henry VIII ; but both were to have moments when it seemed that they too were going down into the abyss that suddenly fissured the uxorious ground on which they had seemed secure. Time brought certainty that Simonis could never bear Milutin an heir to the Byzantine throne ; it also brought evidence that her father, the Emperor Andronicus, was an incompetent ruler who year by year became a less valuable ally. So Milutin entered into negotiations with Charles de Valois, titular emperor of the Latin Empire and brother of Philip the Fair, with the purpose of forming an alliance to depose Andronicus. As a necessary prelude Milutin had to take steps towards being converted and converting his country to Roman Catholicism, and to that end entered upon a long correspondence with the Pope ; and he also proposed marriage to a relative, and possibly any relative, of Charles de Valois. The project failed, because Charles lost interest. Had it succeeded Simonis would have been sent home to her father's court, which would probably itself have been removed to exile, to be despised as a failure as diplomat and breeder ; and this disgrace would have befallen her because the hateful old man who had married her had abandoned himself to the Roman Catholic Church, which she, like every Byzantine since the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, regarded as a band of criminal enemies. Simonis had always loathed Serbia, and it is no wonder that she attempted to escape. When her mother died she took the body home to Constantinople and refused to return, and

Milutin, to whom her flight must have recalled the contemptuous withdrawal of Michael Palaeologus' ambassadors in his youth, forced her back by threats of military action and would not listen to the plea which she reiterated through the years, that he should allow her to become a nun. In the routine of daily life he appears to have treated her kindly, and even with devotion. But it is no wonder that she leaves the same ugly mark on the fabric of Serbian history as Mary Tudor on our English record. She presents the same spectacle of piteous martyrdom not flowering into sanctity but withering into peevishness and hate. A fresco here at Grachanitsa shows her being crowned by an angel, tense as a cat under an undesired caress, full of that lack of peace which passes all understanding, recognisable in the shrew and the prisoner. She left behind her an undying legend of hatred and malice. Any Serbian peasant will tell one that Queen Simonis was an evil woman though he may know nothing else about her. The name "Bloody Mary" has a similar independent existence in the English popular mind.

It is probable that Simonis caused this ill fame by the part she played in alienating her husband from his son Stephen. In the popular calendar of the old Serbian saints and kings which was reprinted from ancient sources for the first time about a hundred years ago, it is definitely stated that that was her offence. The story as it is told there cannot be true, for it represents her as trying to oust Stephen from his position as heir to the throne, and replace him by a son of her own, whereas she had no son, and not until she was manifestly barren did Milutin acknowledge Stephen as his heir. But the outline of the story seems to be correct. This Stephen was probably the son of Milutin's second wife, Elizabeth of Hungary, the nun of Asiatic descent. When he was quite young he had seen his mother displaced by the daughter of George Terteri the Bulgarian Emperor, but he himself remained at court and did valorous work for the state. He went as hostage to Nogai, the Prince of the Tartars, who had married the little Byzantine Euphrosyne, and he remained there in that dangerous capacity for some years. When he returned he was given as bride the daughter of Smilatz, a Bulgarian noble who for some years was the emperor, like many of his fellow-countrymen, for the Bulgarian throne was then as often and diversely occupied as the last chair in

musical chairs. Stephen was also given a part of his father's kingdom as his own principality.

Then civil war broke out between Milutin and Stephen. It is possible that the son rebelled against the father, for there was a party in the state which thought that Milutin showed unpatriotic weakness in his relations with the Byzantine Empire, and it would have supported Stephen. But in a solemn document connected with the foundation of a monastery Stephen accused Simonis of having lied about him to his father ; and it is significant that the campaign began by an invasion of Stephen's principality by Milutin. If this first guilt lies on Simonis, then later and blacker guilt lies on her too. For at the behest of his Byzantine advisers Milutin ordered his son to be banished to Constantinople, and to be blinded before he went. This was not a Serbian punishment ; there the code punished criminals either by simple banishment or by the confiscation of their goods. But the Byzantines used mutilation of one sort and another as a penalty for many crimes, and blindness was often inflicted on persons of high position who might be dangerous to the state if left in possession of all their faculties. So Stephen, with his son Dushan and his daughter Dushitzza, were taken by guards from his father's palace, and borne along the road to Constantinople. Before they left Serbian territory, at that same Sheep's Field where I saw the slaughter of the lamb at the rock, the guards halted and put out his eyes with red-hot irons. I do not know why they chose that particular spot, but tradition is certain that they did. The legend runs that that night St. Nicholas came to him in a dream and said, " Fear not, thine eyes are in my hand." In fact, as quite often happened when the men who used the irons were merciful or clumsy or bribed, the sight had not been destroyed. But Stephen said nothing.

At Constantinople the Emperor Andronicus received him with a kindness hard to explain, save that to such a gentle temperament as his, to do a gracious act in this bloodthirsty age must have been like an hour of rest under a shady tree. Stephen was comfortably lodged in the Monastery of Christ Ruler of All, where he sat in affected blindness, facing the sunshine as if it were the night for more than five years. Such virtuosic performances of fearful cunning did the Tudors inspire in the flesh of their flesh ; so did Mary Tudor hold her breath

to keep it while her father lived, so did Elizabeth when she was Mary Tudor's prisoner. At last Stephen dared tell Andronicus that he could see; and Andronicus bade him continue to bandage his eyes and to tell no one else.

The legend says that shortly afterwards Andronicus sent a mission to Milutin to consider common measures of defence against the Turks, and that he added to the train the abbot of the Monastery of Christ Ruler of All, with instructions that he should find a chance to speak well of Stephen to his father. It is certainly true that two great Serbian churchmen, the scholar Daniel and the statesman Nicodemus, worked on Milutin year after year till he was reconciled to his son. We get here a hint regarding the nature of Simonis: her father Andronicus befriended her enemy Stephen, and though she was devout the ecclesiastics of her Church were not on her side. At last, thanks to these intercessions, Milutin asked Andronicus to send his son back to him. So Stephen travelled home with his little Dushan — his daughter had died during his captivity — and was taken to his father's palace. There he was led to the feet of his father, and he kneeled down and clasped his stiff, jewelled robes, and cried out that whatever his father said he had done he had indeed done, and had long repented of it. Then his father bowed down his bearded bluntness to him and raised him up, and gave him the kiss of forgiveness. But Stephen did not unloose the bandage over his eyes. When Milutin gave him another principality in place of the one he had lost, and bade him go to it and leave his son Dushan at court to be reared as a prince, he went blindfold to claim his possessions. A year or two later nobles came and told him Milutin was dead. But Stephen did not put aside the fiction of his sightlessness till he knew that his father was not only dead but buried. So would a child of Henry VIII have acted, had his father formed the intention to blind him and not succeeded at the first doing.

All this story is implicit in Grachanitsa, in the lavished treasure of its colours and the vigorous fertility of its form. "But," a Western reader may object, "it is a story of barbarism, it shows that it is perfectly correct to say that nothing worth grieving over perished at Kossovo." That judgment applies standards that have never been valid save in the reign of Queen Victoria, which must now be recognised as an oasis in the moral desert of ordinary time. If the amount of violence

habitual to society is admitted it can be seen that the reign of Milutin was the great age that came before the greater age, as Henry VIII's morning came before the noon of England which is called Elizabethan. Milutin was a true king. He tilted his land toward the sun, wherever that might be in its course across the heavens. This can never be done without negotiation, the spirit must deny its appetite for principle. This is more of a sacrifice than would appear, for all men have a lech to live by principle; the good man would live by virtue, the bad man would live by vice, but both alike want a fixed rule for their happiness. The ruler, however, must have none. He must ask himself of every act the opportunist question, whether it tilts his land toward the sun or the shadow, and abide by the answer. This obligation prevents him from being a bad or a good man, but it makes the people feel for him as if he were a loving father.

Hence such a king brings glory and confusion to his country. Conduct breaks its established bounds and covers the whole gamut of conceivable action, not because of laxity, but because of a spirit of enquiry. The king is bewildered by the effects of his own deeds, which work well on the bodies and minds of his subjects, although they are contrary to the accepted moral code. He imagines that he must have discovered a new principle of morality, and feels about for it by a number of experimental acts, of a kind not previously sanctioned or even anticipated. His subjects share his sense of triumph and bewilderment, knowing him to be right when he could be proven wrong by all the authority they knew. So they too give all events their chance to happen, and since their land is tilted toward the sun all seeds planted in the soul come to a prodigious growth.

Such a crescent age can be distinguished from decadence by its discussion of fundamentals. The people that rots declares with every breath that all is already known; the people that is young falls into the other error of declaring that nothing is yet discovered. There is a testing of the capacity of women's bodies for pleasure and pain, which might be pronounced simple voluptuousness, were it not for the simultaneous exploration of their minds and respect for their wills shown in the art of the time. There are excesses of loyalty and treachery which might be put down as mere animal reactions, were it not for the speculative enquiries into the bases of faith and conduct sometimes con-

ceived in a head that was to fall for treason to the axe, sometimes written in the hand that had signed the headsman's warrant. Such an age is moral, not because it conforms to a moral code but because it is in search for one.

Doubtless Milutin was a murderer and a lecher, as red-fanged a husband and father as our Henry VIII; but like him he made war here and treaties there as it profited his country, nourished commerce, and built higher the fortress of the law. This last achievement was neither safe nor simple. He was surrounded by nobles who wore magnificently furred and jewelled garments made from the costliest stuffs sent out by Greece and Italy and Flanders, and practised an etiquette based on the exalted ceremonial of Byzantium, but for all that were apt to fall into common banditry when away from court. Milutin gentled them, diverted their ferocity to the service of the state, and opposed their lawlessness by an increasing elaboration of the law. Here Serbia never took its inspiration from Byzantium. It drew on the juristic achievements of the kingdoms of the North, of Poland, Hungary and Bohemia, and even borrowed here and there from the codes, which were not so simple as might be supposed, of the Mongol invaders. One sign of the Northern influence was the establishment of trial by jury, which under Milutin appeared and developed. We can see him dealing with a specifically Macedonian problem in arranging for the representation of the various races of the district on these juries.

In religion also he had renounced all animal simplicity, no matter what his sword arm and his loins might prefer. Though the Kingdom of Heaven will have to be broadminded indeed to receive him, he might even be called an adept in the Christian faith. With a dualism more often found in the realm of sexual relations, he constantly considered the advisability of betraying the Orthodox Church by capitulation to the Papacy, though he was loyal to it in his soul. His age found proof of his loyalty in his charity, which was indeed impressive; he maintained an army of what were then called lepers, which probably included some victims of true leprosy, but which would consist for the most part of those suffering from skin diseases and those appalling ulcerations due to the Puritan theory, still active and working incalculable harm in the Balkans, that to drive out an infection of the skin it is proper to apply a fiercely irritant ointment or lotion. But these good works may have been what

Americans compactly call fire insurance, or even a mechanical continuance of the routine set up by his pious mother. His participation in the life of the Church, however, admits of no such reading. He was certainly not moved by fear of ecclesiastical power, for he never hesitated to defy it when it was a question of policy, of tilting his land toward the sun. Throughout his reign he ignored the hostility between the Orthodox Church and the Papacy by permitting six Roman Catholic sees in his kingdom. It is more likely that, after the strange fashion of Henry VIII, he believed. Both of them, longing to be free for all possible courses of action, might have prayed, "Lord, I believe, help Thou my belief".

That Milutin was a believer is proved by the fiercely, passionately — it might almost be said unnecessarily — religious quality of the churches he built. Grachanitsa speaks first of all regarding the union of Church and State. Its architect saw in his mind's eye, when there was but the bare site, the Godhead shining from the secret darkness behind the iconostasis; and he saw, advancing towards the iconostasis to draw power from the hidden Godhead, to derive authority for their rank, Milutin and Simonis and their courtiers, dressed in glowing purple, girt with belts of gold studded with pearls and precious stones, multicoloured as flowers of the field. He permitted earthly glory to state its case, to establish its value; but he demonstrated the supremacy of the Godhead's glory by a paradox of forms which were solid as the rock, yet light as the spread wings of a bird. It would be improbable that a society, particularly a small and coherent society, should cause such a church to be built and should afterwards frequent it, without participating in the passion which had engendered it and which it engendered; and its records prove that many among Milutin's courtiers became so enamoured of the hidden Godhead that they could no longer bear to be divided from it by the iconostasis. The Serbian aristocracy included, as well as many sheep-stealers, many saints. Young men fled from the court to become hermits and monks, taking irrevocable vows far stricter than those imposed in the Roman Catholic Church, in such numbers that dangerous gaps began to appear in the governing class; and a law was passed which forbade a religious order to accept any novice, male or female, save with the consent of a Bishop.

In the church the ardour of these young men becomes comprehensible. About us were the thick pillars, cold with their great mass, so like virgin rock, that we might have been standing deep under the earth, among the sources of rivers. Above us the light, dripping down through the narrow windows of the cupolas from the simple unmeaning amplitude of the sky, lay on the frescoes, and revealed an age of perception so delicate, of speculation so profound, that it is almost outside our Western understanding. They do not represent the perfect classical Byzantine art as it was seen in its two great periods, the fourth to the sixth and the ninth to the twelfth centuries. It is not classical in spirit : it does not celebrate the completely comprehended discoveries which a civilisation has achieved by mastering all available information about its environment. But before classicism there must come a preparatory phase of romanticism, in which the age feels its way towards such discoveries, by formulating all conceivable theories and fantasies, to the end that those which are not valid can be distinguished from those that are ; and to such an experimental period, based on the remains of a substantial classicism, belong these frescoes. When Grachanitsa was built, Byzantium had already lost the firm and massive character of supremacy, too many of its forces were diverted by apprehension of the Turks. The spirit of the Empire had therefore found several provincial lodgments, in such places as Salonica, Trebizond, Mistra and Serbia, among populations too different and too distant to be able to carry on the Byzantine tradition without adapting it to their alien natures. Hence Serbo-Byzantine art is a fusion of classicism and romanticism and of two racial spirits, unlike in age, intensity and experience. It is therefore not a unified and completely satisfying art : but it presents many beauties that have never been surpassed by later ages.

There is in these frescoes, as in the parent works of Byzantium, the height of accomplishment in technique and of ambition in content. The Mother of God prays, her lifted hands far apart, in the fashion of those born not far from Asia ; and her nature is as prodigious as might be expected from the mother of a god, the destiny which perplexes her is as amazing as we know it to have been. Two women meet, and a strong wind blows their red and blue cloaks about them. It is the Visitation, and the wind is the Will of God, blowing them to



marvellous fruitfulness. An angel stands before the young Mary and gives her a sharp military command ; she shrinks back, not in refusal, but because she realises more fully than he does how the fulfilment of that order must affect destiny. This version of the Annunciation has an originality, what our grandfathers would have called piquancy, which is noticeable in others among these frescoes ; for nothing here is not profoundly considered, and as the likeness of men lies on the surface and their uniqueness in their depths, this makes for unpredictable vision. Here and there this originality was exploited by the romantic element in this art till it substituted strangeness for beauty, and instead of making a revelation started a debate. It was so with the fresco that made my husband say, " Look, here is something extraordinary. Do you remember at Neresi the fresco of a woman washing the Infant Christ, which looked like a Blake illustration to *The Mental Traveller* ? Well, here is another fresco that looks like a Blake illustration to *Urizen* or *Los*."

That was true, if one could imagine a Blake from whom there had been removed that discordant element which obliged him to see the naked body as an unharmonised assembly of muscles and begin all the prophetic books, and indeed interpenetrate them, with terrific groaning family rows among the supernatural beings. This fresco takes the breath away by the unanticipated beauty of the represented natural forms ; it says, " This is how you would see if you were not as bad as blind ". Against a background of great architectural magnificence, such as one sees in the works of the early Italians, a supernatural youth stands naked on a high and narrow altar, an old man is prostrated in adoring shame before him, and a Bishop stands a little way off, worshipping in less humble ecstasy. The nakedness of the youth is depicted with extreme solemnity, as if the human body were the copy of a divine image, and whosoever could completely realise it could completely realise the form of God. The garments of the old man are a thin clothing for his limbs, his limbs are a thin clothing for his spirit's turmoil. The Bishop's cloak, a superb example of that early adventure in abstract art, the play that the Byzantine artists loved to make with the crosses on ecclesiastical garments, wraps an impressive man in greater impressiveness. The relations of these figures and their background are so proper that when we left the

church we could not remember whether it was vast or minute, whether it covered half the chapel wall or only a fraction of it. Yet it lacked the effect of sufficiently great art. It raised the question — What are these people, and what are they doing? This would be asked by any spectator, however well he were acquainted with the subject, which is, in fact, an episode in the life of St. Peter of Alexandria, a martyr in the persecutions of Diocletian: Christ appeared to him in nakedness, to foretell that his garment, the Church, was to be reft from him by the Arian heresy. It remained true, after that historical fact was known, that these three people's strange demonstrations of their being, the opinions they are expressing on divinity and humanity and the fusion of these in ecclesiastical authority, required an amplification which can only be made in language. This new and experimental age had not discovered the limits of each art, it had not learned that painting must not touch a subject on which literature has still an essential word to say.

This resemblance of Serbo-Byzantine art to the work of Blake, which seems to me entirely mysterious, not to be explained by any conceivable theory, has nothing to do with romanticism; for it is strongly apparent in the most classical fresco in Grachanitsa. This depicts a mystic, and both the Orthodox Church and William Blake knew very well what mysticism was. The Orthodox Church had drawn its knowledge direct from Christ and the Apostles and had developed it in the monasteries of Mount Athos; and Blake was one of the long line of mystics which England finds it so much easier to produce outside the Church than inside. This fresco shows Elijah sitting in one of those caves to which El Greco has accustomed us, an enclosing womb of rock. Beyond it are signs of a forest that makes its own night in the day; and at its mouth are two highly stylised little trees, symbols of barrenness. The old man's clenched right hand supports his bearded chin; his head is thrown back in an ecstasy of thought; his left hand grips his bony knee. He is wrapped in a sheepskin, his tired feet are bare. "This is a study of what our people alone know," said Constantine, "this is mysticism without suffering."

In that he named a distinction between the modern Western world and this Byzantine world, which is at bottom a distinction between poverty and wealth. The West imagines a hermit in the desert as inconvenienced by lack of material objects. He is

always assumed to have so few ideas about the spiritual world that he has difficulty in keeping his mind on them, and therefore has to regard the mere exclusion of physical comfort as a positive victory which has constantly to be rewon. This actually was the state of many of the Western mystics. St. Jerome shows in his letters that his animal preoccupations were always bursting into the sparsely populated area of his spiritual life; and St. Augustine describes in his *Confessions* how the sight of a lizard catching flies or a spider entangling them in his web was enough to distract him from contemplation. But in this fresco of Elijah and in another which shows St. John, wild-eyed with more wisdom than a man can carry, there is depicted the mystic who went into the desert because his head was so full of ideas about the spiritual world that everyday talk was in his ears as a harrel-organ playing outside a concert-hall is to a musician, the mystic who does not want to eat or drink or sleep with women because that is to take time off from the ecstatic pleasure of pursuing the ramifications of good and evil through his bosom and through the universe. There is a raven alighting in Elijah's cave, food in its beak; he will hardly thank it. If a naked woman appeared before him she would be not a temptation but an offence, offending as a person in a library who begins chatting to a student who has found a long-sought reference a few minutes before closing time. Life is not long enough for these men to enjoy the richness of their own perceptions, to transmute them into wisdom.

Their wealth is past our computation. Our cup has not been empty, but it was never full like theirs in this world, at a spot where Asia met Europe, at a time when the governing civilisation had known success as well as failure, and there were these new Slav races to give the sensibility and vigour of their youth to exploiting this inherited treasure of experience. Across one of the walls of Grachanitsa is shown the Falling Asleep of the Virgin Mary, the state which preceded her Assumption, a subject often treated by the Byzantines. There is no man living to-day who, exploring his mind in the light of that idea, could draw out so much.

In the foreground of the fresco is the Virgin lying on her bier. By the lax yet immutable line is rendered the marvel of death, the death which is more than the mere perishing of consciousness, which can strike where there is no consciousness

and annul a tree, a flower, an ear of corn. Above her bier there shines a star of light ; within it stands Christ, taking into his arms his mother's soul in the likeness of a swaddled child. Their haloes make a peaceful pattern, the stamp of a super-imperial power, within the angles of the star. About them throngs a crowd of apostles and disciples, come hastily from the next world or from distant lands to attend the Virgin's death, wearing their haloes as bubbling yet serene spheres. On the edge of the crowd stand some bishops in their cross-covered mantles, rock-like with the endurance of the Church, which cannot be perturbed by the most lacerating grief, and others, also in flowing garments but with bodies liquid with grief, and still others, also in flowing garments but with bodies tautened by effort, low under the weight of the bier. One astonished man is attached to it by both arms ; he is a Jew of the party that killed Christ, who has tried to upset the bier, and will be glued to it until an angel cuts off his hands with a sword. The background is full of angels as the Eastern Church loved to conceive them, ethereal messengers who are perpetually irradiated by the divine beauty and communicate its laws to flesh-bound man, who embody, in fact, a dream of perfect vision and unfrustrated will, unhampered by the human handicaps of incomplete information and clumsy faculties. Without a taint of labour but with immense force they throw open the doors of Heaven, and light blazes on its threshold, a light inhabited by welcoming saints.

The huge imaginative space occupied by this small fresco is washed by two swinging tides. There is a wave of such sincere and childish grief as children feel when their mothers die, that breaks and falls and ebbs ; there is a rising sea of exaltation in the Son who can work all magic and cancel this death or any other, making glory and movement where stillness and the end seemed to be ineluctable. The sides of the fresco are filled in with buildings, distorted with the most superb audacity in order to comply with the general pattern, yet solid and realistic in effect ; we are amazed, as we all so often are during our lives, that our most prodigious experiences take place in the setting of the everyday world, that the same scenery should be used for the pantomime and the tragedy. Behind these buildings there is a firmament which evokes another recurrent amazement. It is the most astonishing of all the things which happen to us that anything should happen at all. It is

incredible that there should be men and women, mothers and sons, biers and buildings, grief and joy ; it would seem so much more probable that the universe should have as its sole packing empty nothingness. Existence in itself, taken at its least miraculous, is a miracle.

But this fresco, though it is inspired by these ideas and communicates them, is pure painting ; it essays no task proper to another art. These ideas manifest themselves because they were part of the intellectual and spiritual wealth which the painter had inherited from Byzantium, and he could engage in only the most superficial activities without being reminded of them. But he was wholly loyal to his art. He restricted himself to dealing with certain problems of form and colour, but such was his command over his technique that these restrictions gave him as much liberty as most men's talents and allotment of time are likely to need. He knew how to put circle by straight line and straight line by circle, and pattern by pattern within an enfolding pattern, in a design which by a certain angularity never consented to renounce its nature, always refused to pretend to be a plain copy of material objects ; he knew how to exploit the Near Eastern palette of strong colours which have had their strength eroded by stronger sunlight to pale virile essences, or obscured in the labyrinths of Byzantine palaces and only half revived by the glow from torches and candelabra. It is a convention of form and colour which we of the West know through its use by El Greco, and which we are tempted to mistake for his self-made fortune, if we do not know the treasure-house of tradition where he found it. In Grachanitsa, where the painting of these frescoes and the architecture of the church illustrate two arts proceeding from the same late Byzantine culture, we can see how inexhaustible were the treasures of this tradition. Here artists knew the supremest wealth their kind can know ; they were rich in creation and they worked for an audience rich in perception. These people were born into a kingdom which was as kingdoms of earth should be, yielding good grain and good meat and good wine ; and they had had enough of everything for long enough to forget starvation and outgrow excess. Before their eyes was a kingdom of the mind, founded by another people, which, like all kingdoms of the mind, had never been completed, but was unique in beauty. Well nourished and full of power, the Serbs went forth to know the new pleasures of art

and thought, and to complete this culture with a richness that should match the richness of its first intention.

And when we went out of the church there was nothing. Defeat had taken all. Across a dusty yard which had once been a garden, soldiers wheeled barrows full of stones, not to rear again the vanished palaces, but to put up a hostel to divert pence from peasants that might otherwise be spent at a poor inn. On the footboard of our car Dragutin sat smoking, and by him there stood a dull-eyed boy, wearing an unbuttoned shirt of stained linen, patched breeches and broken sandals. A sore on his lip was smeared with sky-blue ointment. "Go now! Go now!" Dragutin said to him, and crushed his cigarette under-foot. "Look, he is foolish. He knows you are going on to the Trepcha mines, because most English people who come to Grachanitsa are on their way to Trepcha, or have been there. So he wants you to give him a letter to the manager, the great Gospodin Mac. But I ask you, what would they want with the likes of this poor little one? For everything there is *fino*, *fino*, *brlo fino*, and they can have anyone they like to work for them, for they pay well and are just people, all dukes." The boy said, "There is nothing for me to do here. I want to work in the mines. Lady, gentlemen, there is nothing at all for me to do here, I want to go to the mines."

Outside the walls of the compound rose the shabby, empty hills which in Milutin's time had been covered with villages. They receded into distances that were truly vast, for a traveller could penetrate them for many miles before he came on life that was gentle, where the meals were full and delicate, and there was clerkly knowledge. Yet when Grachanitsa was built the people on these plains and hills had eaten game and fine fattened meats off gold and silver and pewter, and the noble men and women, of whom there were a great number, closely kin to the peasantry, spoke Greek as well as Serbian. But because the Christians had lost the battle of Kossovo all this life had perished. Only there remained the pious gravity of the soldiers, which is something the West does not know. An English soldier is more cynical than an English civilian; but when the Serbian puts on uniform he becomes quiet with a deep unformulated faith, which is perhaps a memory of a Cesaropapist empire whose emperor was the Vicar of Christ. Also there was in Dragutin a kind of lordliness that might have been an

inheritance from a nobility that because it was half-peasant did not lose its force when its possessions were rapt from it. Nothing else was left on this scene of what had once been there ; the residue was pitifully thin, thin as a shadow cast by a clouded sun. The boy shifted his weight from one leg to the other, and said, " There is nothing here for me to do."

### *Prishtina*

" This is Prishtina," said Constantine. Prishtina was one of the capitals of the Serbian monarchs ; for they had a peripatetic court to cope with the immensity of their new country, as was the custom in early Hungary and Germany, and held it now at Skoplje, now at Tetovo, now here, now in some Northern town nearer the Danube. We blinked at a dull and dusty little village. " Here we must have lunch," continued Constantine, " for it will be too late when we get to Trepcha. You can throw away your flowers," he added, with the melancholy and unaggressive malice of an invalid, " they are all dead." We sat down at a table outside a hotel in the principal square. Near us a horse, angular as a Euclidean diagram, seemed to be holding up and to be held up by a greenish cab. Rickety little wooden shops, like hencoops on an ill-found small-holding, leaned up against each other, proffering at their oblique doors and in their tiny windows the smallest and most ingenuous specimens conceivable of the goods it was their business to sell.

A waiter took our order. Because the Turks were in the Balkans, and where Turks were there were coffee-houses, the smallest town hereabouts is familiar with the waiter, who in Western countries is the sign of a sophisticated centre. There came to stand beside us the hotel-keeper very complacent about his position. Around us sat men in Western clothes more fantastic than any peasant costume could be, because they and their tailors had never seen a suit till they were grown men. It did not take us long to order lunch, for the bill of fare was short. " Chicken and rice," the waiter said, and the hotel-keeper echoed plumply, " Chicken and rice." He bent down, and shifted the tablecloth so that there fell at my place a particularly fine wine-stain, large and of a decorative shape, which the sunlight of some days had mellowed to a delicate

mauve. With such an air, on days when I have been looking my best or have been companioned by the great, the *mâitres d'hôtel* of famous restaurants have greeted me with gardenias.

"When you go back to England," said Constantine sourly, "you will despise us for this, and say that we are all like pigs, and you will forget that we have had no advantages like you in your country who have always been rich." "Nonsense," I said, "I know quite well that this means nothing more than that people hereabouts have not yet heard about the convention that tablecloths should be clean. They know in most places that the world has made up its mind that bedclothes must not be dirty, they have learned it only too well. In a hotel at Nish I once spent a most wretched night, coughing and choking myself awake every time I fell asleep, because the sheets had been boiled in a powerful disinfectant. It was like going to bed in a bottle of smelling salts. Those people will be far cleaner than the English once they begin."

"There is one thing, I notice," said my husband, "and that is that whether Prishtina is clean or dirty, and in spite of the fact that it is extremely poor, I think poorer than any other town that we have visited — though not of course poorer than some of the villages — the people are not downcast. The hotel-keeper is very proud of being what he is and where he is. He does not dream of apologising for his surroundings, as I have known hotel-keepers do in places that struck me as simple and beautiful. And the people who go by look very cheerful, though their faces are lined and their bodies marrowless and bent." "It is because they were worse before," said Constantine. "This district was the worst of any place in the Christian provinces of Turkey, because there was nothing here but the simplest agriculture, there were neither urban centres of trade and industry, nor even any luxury crops like tobacco. They raised nothing here but grain and animals." "In fact," said my husband, "they raised the most necessary things there are, therefore they were desperately poor. You need not trouble to tell us that. It is so in our country also, and indeed all over the world. That is perhaps the fault for which we are going to be punished."

"It is perhaps the fault for which Byzantium was punished," I said; "the two classes, the 'powerful' and the 'poor', fought hard from the ninth century. The small landowners



and the free peasants were so constantly harried by invasion and civil war that they bartered their liberty in return for the protection of the great nobles, who took advantage of the position to absorb the small landowners' estates and to make serfs of the free peasants. At first the monarchy fought these great nobles, and even appeared to have vanquished them. Feudalism, the exploitation of a country by its large landowners, could not exist in a declared theocracy, which implied the conception of divinely impartial justice for all individuals and every class. But when the Latins invaded the Byzantine Empire they brought with them the feudal system which was established in their own countries, and it could not be driven out with them, because the Byzantine nobles, like all the rich, would rather choke than not have their mouths full, and applauded the idea of any extension of their wealth and their power, however dangerous. Therefore Byzantine society became inconsistent. Its claim to theocracy was no longer a holy myth, but a glutton's lie.

"Yes," I continued, delighted to speak on a subject of which my husband knew less than I did, "that sowed the seed of ruin in the state. The poor were thereafter so poor that the aggressive among them became mercenary soldiers with no loyalty save to the nobles who paid them. I fancy that the centre of power was shifting towards Serbia in these last days because the peasant, though he was nearly everywhere bound to his land and forbidden to sell it, had his definite legal rights on which the nobles were not allowed to encroach, and he could very easily, if he showed ability in managing his land and in his general conduct, join the ranks of the lesser nobility. One got, in fact, an expanding country that gave its citizens no reason to foment civil disorder and every reason to resist invasion. Had it not been for the Turks, Byzantine civilisation could have retreated here and known a second flowering in the Serbian Empire, just as a considerable part of our European civilisation has retreated to America and lives there in universities and art galleries and concert-rooms and laboratories planned on an ampler scale than we can afford."

"What is this?" asked my husband. This was no rhetorical question. He really wanted to know. "It is your chicken and rice," said the waiter. "Yes, it is your chicken and rice," chirruped the hotel-keeper. The dish regarded as a whole was

not unpalatable, for the rice was well cooked ; with some good bread, butter, sheep's cheese, white wine and cherries, we did not do so badly. But the bird itself was a ghastly prodigy, lean and twisted in its leanness, like one of El Greco's fasting saints. In these parts, because the poverty of the land forbids the peasants to fatten their stock for more than a few weeks, one often eats very young meat, the stuff the germ plasm puts out into the world however its adult transmitter has been nourished, part of the continuous belt of animal life. The lamb and the sucking-pig are made on such a scale that their birthright of flesh amounts to something, but on the small and complicated bone structure of a bird it is hardly more than a flavour. This being the only kind of poultry that the hotel-keeper knew, he beamed at us as we worried the carcass. A plump chicken that was easy to eat would have seemed to him wrong in the same way as a golf-course with no hazards.

"It does not matter at all, my dear," said my husband. "I have really done very well." But the chicken had perhaps some part in making him say, "Perhaps you are right in thinking that Serbia could have carried on the work of Byzantium, but I doubt it. I seem to remember that there were Byzantine writers who recorded their impressions of visits to Serbia with positive disgust at its barbarity. There was, I think, a writer called Gregoras." "There was indeed," I replied, "but he was an ass." That was apt to be the character of Byzantine writers. There could be no effective literature, because there was no integrated language. Three kinds of Greek were known in Byzantium. There was first the childish and degenerate Greek spoken by the poor, and secondly the supple and developed Greek used by the wealthy, and there was a vast difference between these two languages because there was a wide gulf between these two classes. There was also classical Greek which all educated people had to learn ; and the professional man of letters felt that to keep up his dignity he must either write this third form of language or the wealthy man's Greek distorted to resemble it as much as possible. That is to say, he wrote as a conscious snob and dilettante, which is never a good prescription ; and Gregoras brought to the task a fatuity which we can recognise in its full distastefulness, because it flourishes unchanged to-day.

He wrote with that verbosity which results not from exuber-

ance but from destitution. "The sun had crossed half our meridian," he writes somewhere, "it was now on its way to hide itself and was descending *as it does every day*, towards the horizon." Through millions of such phrases there emerges the horrid fact that he exactly resembled the more tiresome type of well-to-do Englishman. He wrote a letter to a friend about his visit on a diplomatic mission to Serbia at the end of the thirteenth century which has been widely quoted by historians, particularly by those who are anti-Slav; and in this the resemblance is stark. This expedition which, as he puts it, "comprised a sevenfold decade of man and beast", began badly by starting at night, for no respectable reason, and blundering along a path by a river through a forest, where they became embroiled with a number of armed men whom they assumed to be bandits, but who turned out to be a frontier police maintained by the Serbian Empire. There is something very English in the circumstance that none of the party knew more than a few words of Serbian, although for a hundred years it had been of vital importance to Byzantium to have good commercial and diplomatic relations with Serbia. When they got to the Serbian court at Skoplje, Gregoras and his friends had no eyes for anything native to the country, for they were so enormously impressed by the Serbian King Stephen's mother-in-law, who had been married to the Byzantine Emperor John Palaeologos and had recently been bereaved of her husband. He himself took enormous snob-pleasure in her grief which took the form of magnificent purple Gummidgery, and felt flattered at being allowed to watch her apostrophising her husband as "Oh, thou heir to numerous Emperors, who wert adorned with all the virtues", while tearing at her cheeks till her nails were red with blood.

The insufficiently diplomatic mission clustered round her for ten days, comforting her for her loss and for bearing it in this savage country. The Serbian King, they whispered, was not showing nearly enough respect to the Queen Mother in the arrangements he was making for her return to Constantinople, but what could one expect? Monkeys, they tartly agreed, must act like monkeys and ants like ants, and neither can be expected to behave like eagles and lions. In a typical sentence Gregoras says, "He was truly a sage who first conceived in his mind, and expressed it in his words, whether he was Thales of Mileto or Plato son of Aristo, or both, the second

having borrowed from the first, that he was grateful from the bottom of his heart because he had been born a Greek and not a barbarian". Really, he titters, when he and his party remembered how things were done in Constantinople, they felt as if here in Serbia they had fallen among beetles that were decked out with necklaces and bracelets.

That touches a chord familiar to those of us who are acquainted with the Transatlantic situation, "My dear, it was too awful, seeing all those wonderful jewels and marvellous clothes worn by these dreadfully vulgar people." It unfortunately happens that, though many nice little boys and girls die when young, the nasty child who spoils the Christmas party by jeering at the presents on the tree always grows up; and if he is a European he is certain, though not so certain as he would have been a hundred years ago, to despise the United States. Such as he affect to hate a new and expanding society for its ostentation and vulgarity, but the truth is that they can tolerate social ritual only when it has crystallised into an opaque form which conceals its inner meaning. Hospitality that is still determined by generosity and wealth that enjoys its own good fortune disturb them by recalling fundamental realities which their effecness would prefer to forget. To this class Gregoras clearly belonged; and just as nothing that could be said against America by an English dowager duchess who had not done so well as she had hoped out of her lectures on her herb garden could avail against the known handsomeness of the Continent, so Gregoras' letter cannot prove its point against the genius of Grachanitsa.

"But tell me," said my husband, "which King Stephen was it who had the Byzantine mother-in-law? For I thought that the Stephen who was Milutin's son and was blinded by him and succeeded him had married a Bulgarian princess." But this was one of the occasions when life falls into a pattern, when the design repeats itself. Stephen did not come easily to his crown. In order to inherit it he had been obliged to keep up his pretence that he was blind until his father was dead, and therefore quite a number of people believed that he would be unable to defend it. His brother or half-brother, Constantine, who like himself had been bastardised by Milutin's annulment of his earlier marriages when he married Simonis, and his cousin Vladislav, son of that crippled King Dragutin who had

abdicated and become the *Catholic King of Bosnia*, both tried to snatch his throne. Vladislav he merely exiled to Hungary, but Constantine he had nailed to a cross and then sawn asunder. This was not an uncommon form of punishment in the fourteenth century, and Stephen, though humane, was no more than a man of his time. Then, and not until then, was he sure of his kingdom and free to live according to his own nature.

But immediately Stephen became a faithful copy of his father, who had been his enemy and had been thought his antithesis. At the first possible moment he initiated just such overtures to the Papacy as Milutin had made in the earlier part of his reign, even going so far as receiving a Papal Legate to discuss the terms on which the Serbian Empire was to be handed over to Roman Catholicism. He had no need to imitate his father in divorce, for his first wife had died, but he attempted to follow him in matrimonial opportunism, for he tried to marry Blanche, the daughter of Philip of Taranto, a member of the house of Anjou exercising titular suzerainty over most of Greece and Albania, in order to ally himself with the Catholic Latin powers who were threatening Orthodox Byzantium. This was perfidy more monstrous than Milutin's, for it was the great Archbishop Nicodemus who had saved Stephen from exile by persuading his father to recall him and who had secured him his throne by throwing the influence of the Church against Constantine and Vladislav. It was also exceedingly imprudent, for the Serbs were fully as devoted to Orthodoxy as they had been in the previous reign, and the Papacy had lost much of its influence by leaving Rome for Avignon. When after five years he abandoned this policy it was only to imitate another of Milutin's mistakes, for he then married a Byzantine princess. It is true that his bride, Marya Palaeologos, was a less sinister character than Simonis, but the marriage resembled its earlier prototype in two respects. It was unpopular with the Serbian nationalist party, who wanted the Byzantines to be united with them by military force rather than by family relations ; and it sowed trouble between the King and his heir.

Life is most apt to repeat a design and fall into a pattern when it is weak and diseased. When it is powerful and healthy it is always unpredictable. This means that timid people refuse to let it take its course and insist on provoking events with which they are already familiar, preferring the known evil to the un-

known. Some of the repetition on which Stephen insisted added to the power and the glory of Serbia, for what he imitated was his father's strength. He followed him in church-building ; Dechani, the great monastery at Petch we were going to visit after we had seen Kossovo and the Trepcha mines, was his foundation. He followed him in military triumph ; there was a new Bulgarian Tsar, Michael, who found the Byzantine Empire quite ready to combine with him against Serbia, in spite of the marital alliance made through Marya Palaeologos, and this invasion Stephen brilliantly defeated in a decisive battle at Kustendil, which was then known as Velbuzhd. But the weakness that made him an imitator made his imitations of strength of no avail.

Milutin had raged against his son, blinded and exiled him, pardoned him and kept him impotent after the reconciliation, because he was the stronger of the two. Even had Stephen had the power to revolt against him, his political wisdom had created a people so contented that they would never have considered supporting the son against the father. Milutin's genius guaranteed him the right to sit in his throne till natural death removed him. But when Stephen raged against his son he invited a different destiny, for his son was a greater man than himself or Milutin, and against this menacing and prodigious heir he had built no bulwark of a people's loyalty. He had indeed greatly alarmed and irritated the nobles by failing to consolidate his victory over Bulgaria by statesmanlike action and leaving it a resentful and armed autonomous state. His son set himself at the head of the malcontents, conquered his father, and imprisoned him in a castle to the north of Kossovo. Then he had himself crowned king by the great scholar and statesman, Archbishop Daniel. It was necessary that this should be done soon, while his hands were still clean, since Daniel was incorruptible ; for two months later, with his connivance if not by his actual orders, Stephen was strangled in prison.

Thus dreadfully was it announced that this family of amazing genius, which had now been reinforced with Byzantine and French and Bulgarian and Asiatic blood of proven worth, had reached its moment of divine positiveness. The seed that had travelled from loin to loin of the Nemanyas, driving them from the Adriatic swamp of their beginnings to glory and torture and

art and crime and civilisation, had at last found its proper instrument. This son of Stephen was also called Stephen. To distinguish them the father is called Stephen Dechanski, from the great monastery he founded, and the son is called Stephen Dushan. There is a dispute about the meaning of the word Dushan. It might be a term of endearment, a diminutive of *dusha*, the soul ; but some have tried to derive it from the verb *dushiti*, to strangle, and seen in it a reference to his father's fate. But plainly the first is the proper root. He was probably called that in childhood, for his sister was called Dushitza ; and Slavs would not find it incongruous to give a national hero such a tender name. It is, on the other hand, unlikely that they should go about calling him "the strangler", for if he had been that once he could be it again. It is as improbable that Queen Elizabeth's courtiers should have gone about speaking of her not as Gloriana but by some name alluding to the axe that put an end to Norfolk and Essex and Mary. The analogy must suggest itself, for, even as Milutin was Serbia's Henry VIII, so Stephen Dushan was its Elizabeth.

Stephen Dechanski came between him and his grandfather Milutin, as Edward and Mary came between Henry VIII and Elizabeth : fragile creatures not insulated from the lightning that played round their families and wilted by it, not inspired. But Stephen Dushan could grasp any thunderbolt, perhaps because, like Elizabeth, he needed all arms, being wholly surrounded by enemies and in mortal fear. In a few years he made himself the most powerful monarch in the fourteenth century, and if he had not he would have become a vassal. On his east was Bulgaria, which his father had left only half pacified ; on his west was Catholic Bosnia, always plotting with the Papacy to attack Orthodox Serbia ; on his north was Hungary, as always suicidally eager to attack its neighbours when they were attacked by Asiatic invaders ; on his south was the Byzantine Empire, which was ready to fight him but quite unable to fight the Turks as they swept on towards Europe. To confront all these enemies he must be more than a king, he must be an emperor, and unconquered at that. It was so with Elizabeth. If she were not to be Gloriana of a supreme England her head must be on the block and her country the wash-pot of France or Spain.

Stephen Dushan dealt first of all with Bulgaria ; he threat-

ened it with arms and then married the Tsar's sister Helen. It is typical of this perplexing age that this woman, who must have been handed over to her husband like so much merchandise, who had every reason to be timid and cultivate no art but the smile that melts the jailer, became a figure of commanding ability. She was her husband's constant companion and adviser, and impressed foreign diplomats by her sense and courage both before and after his death. Next he led a campaign against Byzantium, conquering a large part of Macedonia and besieging Salonica. That he could not follow up to its full conclusion, for he was stabbed in the back by the King of Hungary and had to hurry northward to repel an invasion. But his successes had already been sufficient to enable him to impose a treaty on the Byzantines which was likely to make them respect him in future. In the north he defeated the King of Hungary and seized a considerable slice of his territory. Later he drove the House of Anjou out of its possessions in Greece and Albania, which improved his strategical position in relation to Byzantium.

All these were affairs of arms ; but he worked by diplomacy also. He stretched across his troublesome Catholic neighbours in Bosnia and shook hands with the Republic of Venice, which was inclined to regard him with sympathy, since it was at war with his own enemy, Hungary, over Dalmatia. It is needless to say that he found Venice, as always, selfish and short-sighted and anti-Slav, and to protect his interests he had to practise the cunctatory, teasing guile that we take as characteristic of Queen Elizabeth. Sometimes we recognise in him, as well, her secret, mystifying grin by which she so often infuriated foreign diplomats. Once he wrote to Venice begging to be allowed shelter there if his country should be overrun with enemies. This has been regarded by some historians, who have not taken the precaution of examining its date, as evidence of the insecurity of his reign. But it was written nine years after his accession to the throne, when he had just defeated the Angevins and had every reason to feel pleased with himself. "What a business it is to treat with a woman," complained one of Elizabeth's Spanish ambassadors, "who must have a hundred thousand devils in her body, notwithstanding that she is for ever telling me that she yearns to be a nun and to pass her time praying."

That tale Stephen Dushan also could tell. He had a prolonged correspondence with the Popes Clement VI and Innocent



VI which he must have carried on in a spirit of pure cynicism, for the Papacy had been at Avignon for thirty years or so and was now simply an instrument of French foreign policy, and far too heavily involved with Hungarian interests to be able to promise much to Serbia. But he affected to be anxious for conversion, though when the Pope dispatched precise instructions as to how this might be arranged he was apt to assume a glassy blankness, as if he had hardly understood what all these letters were about. In fact he was a devoted member of the Orthodox Church, though his relations with it were curious. It did not forgive him then or afterwards for the murder of his father. Though the Nemanyan kings were described by the astonishing term "born in sainthood" because they were descended from St. Simeon, and both Milutin and Stephen Dechanski were revered as saints, there was no nonsense about canonising Stephen Dushan. But like his father and grandfather he took no important step without consulting the great Archbishop Daniel; and as time went on he became actively interested in the organisation of the Church, for legal and political reasons.

The path of his ambitions lay southwards. He meant to win one of the multiple crowns of Byzantium; the Empire was distraught by civil war and he knew he could seize it and rule it. That alone would have prevented his adherence to the Roman Catholic Church, for it was not thinkable that Byzantium could be ruled by anyone not Orthodox. But there was also a technical problem to be solved. Only a patriarch could crown an emperor and it was quite obvious that the Oecumenical Patriarch, who was a fierce partisan of the existing imperial families, would never consent to crown a Serb conqueror. So Stephen Dushan convoked a Great Council of Serb and Bulgarian ecclesiastics at Skoplje and induced them to raise the Serbian Archbishopric of Petch to a Patriarchate. Less than a month later the newly appointed Patriarch crowned Stephen Dushan Emperor and Autocrat of the Serbs and the Byzantines, the Bulgarians and Albanians, his wife an empress, and their son a king. This amounted to the schismatic foundation of a new nationalist Church, but the situation was treated with great calm, so different are the tempers of the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox faiths. Ultimately the Oecumenical Patriarch anathematised the Emperor, the new Patriarch, the whole

Serbian Church and the whole Serbian nation, but not for nearly seven years, and then for reasons that were largely political. Meanwhile Stephen Dushan behaved handsomely to such remnants of the purely Byzantine Church as were incorporated in his expanding territories, not only confirming but increasing the privileges of the see of Ochrid. He was an extremely tolerant ruler, and it was definitely his policy to let conquered territories inhabited by non-Serbian populations retain all their accustomed forms of government.

This theory broke down, however, when he took Thessaly from the Empire. There he found that the Byzantine clergy were urging their congregations to revolt, and he had to supplant them by Serbians. This was undoubtedly an interference with the soul of a people, but it can at least be argued that he was constrained by necessity. When Mussolini prevents the Slovenes from using their own language in their churches and their schools and their homes, it cannot be urged in his excuse that if they were not part of Italy they would be part of a neighbouring disorder which would be fatal to Italian peace, for if they were on the other side of his frontier they would be incorporated in the unaggressive and civilised state of Yugoslavia. But in the days of Stephen Dushan, the Byzantine Empire was a masterless land, where weeds grew that spread to all neighbouring fields and smothered all profitable crops. We know its state from the unimpeachable evidence of one who recorded that state without shame, since he himself was responsible for it and thought that all he did was good ; we have the memoirs of John Cantacuzenus, the Byzantine usurper.

That detestable man was one of those men who are the price a civilisation pays in its decay for the achievements of its prime. In Byzantium, as in many other societies, government was reserved to the hereditarily favoured and to the lucky, who were immediately taken into the bosom of the hereditarily favoured as soon as their luck had declared itself, since the rich are apt to believe riches are a mark of divine favours. A closed and self-satisfied group, they were able to develop the technique of government to a point very near perfection, and to realise its full potentialities by exchanging the information which came to their hands through their monopoly of power. Thus they secured more and more successes for their country and for themselves, until they became in their own eyes magicians who

could not know failure. In the end they came to regard national prosperity as a secretion of their class, which it could produce for ever provided it led a healthy life and was allowed to practise its traditional activities; and this was a fantasy so delicious that they could not bear to be awakened from it even when it conflicted with their own interests. We English are familiar with such bemusement. Many of our manufacturers refuse to alter their methods by which they established their wealth in the nineteenth century, although it is written in their balance-sheets that they are losing the twentieth-century market; and our diplomats have for long behaved as if British sovereignty were guaranteed simply by the mode of living habitual in legations and embassies.

There comes a time in the history of every country when even its most subdued and credulous children see through the fantasy of its governors, usually for the reason that it is threatened by famine and danger, and its governors exaggerate that fantasy to an insulating madness rather than face reality. Cantacuzenus was the sign that the Byzantine Empire had come to such a pass. It was, of course, doomed. Destruction by the Turks awaited it, but it had already been destroyed by the merciless West: by the greed of Venice and Genoa and Pisa, which had demanded murderously exorbitant trade agreements from it in return for help against the marauding Latins; by the intrigues of the Papacy, which always hated the Orthodox Church more bitterly than Islam; by the foreign mercenaries who bound themselves to fight against the Turks and turned in treachery against their employer. There is, indeed, no end to the crimes committed against Byzantium by the other and supposedly more civilised side of Europe; and while it worked slowly Asia worked faster. Quite soon the Turks had eaten into Byzantine territory over in Asia Minor, and this was of the gravest importance, for from those districts the Empire had drawn most of her sailors and soldiers. There was nothing the Byzantines could have done save resign themselves to partnership with Serbia and Bulgaria, who were of the same religion and related in culture. This could have been arranged without the embarrassment of a confessed capitulation through the institution of the multiple crowns. There was no limit to the number of Byzantine emperors which could coexist, and at one time there had been five. One only of these exercised the imperial power,

and the others were sleeping partners, ready to act in a consultative capacity or as successors. In Serbia this custom had already been adopted and several Nemanyan kings had crowned their sons as secondary kings with special rights over a part of the country. It should have been easy to make an arrangement which would have united the Orthodox Balkan peoples under two or three emperors, particularly as by now the Byzantine population was largely Slav. That, however, was not the will of John Cantacuzenus.

He was the heir to one of the great fortunes which shamefully existed in this shattered state, and he was the Great Domestic, which is to say the military commander-in-chief of the Emperor Andronicus II. His disintegrating influence was first made manifest when the Emperor disinherited his grandson, Andronicus the Younger, after he had pushed generally unsatisfactory conduct to a climax by employing some archers to hide outside his mistress's door and assassinate a visitor of whom he was jealous. As the dead man proved to be his brother, and his father, who was an invalid, died of shock on hearing of the tragedy, the old Emperor's action was explicable enough. But so violent were the times that some of the nobles thought it unreasonable and refused to accept the Emperor's nomination of another grandson as his heir. This preposterous movement was supported by John Cantacuzenus, who thereupon led the country into seven years of civil war. He left an extremely detailed autobiography to tell us why and how he did it, which is a disgusting work. It resembles that mixture of white of egg and sugar used instead of pure cream by some pastrycooks: endless pleas of self-justification make the page unnaturally white, it is sickly with a smug sense of good form, it is slimy for lack of principle, and recognition of reality. There could be no more convincing proof that in certain periods a conservative class can be more disruptive than any revolutionary horde.

Unquestionably Cantacuzenus was a man of great ability. Byzantine administration had developed a tradition of efficiency and the army was the most highly organised that Europe was to see till modern times, so a successful commander-in-chief was likely to be a brilliant man by any standards. He prided himself on his powers of negotiation, no doubt with reason, for Byzantine diplomacy was extremely accomplished. But negotiation is an

art safely to be practised only in the years of plenty, when there is a surplus which can be comfortably haggled over by the parties involved. In gaunter times a country must lay down the conditions necessary for its own preservation, and annihilate those that will not concede them. Cantacuzenus, however, was constitutionally unable to see that Byzantium could ever not be at its zenith, and with the utmost recklessness he encouraged the difference between the Emperor and his grandson, in the hope that his skill would arrange a compromise between them. That hope was more than gratified. During the seven years of civil war he thus precipitated, he was able to present three most ably framed treaties for the signatures of the disputants as they stood bloodstained in their ravaged country. Cantacuzenus was a surgeon to Byzantium, and the operation was always successful, but the patient always died.

At length his fellow-countrymen began to notice something about him. They showed an extreme reluctance to suffer him in any position of power, and they manifested it in an unmistakable manner when the younger Andronicus died and left him guardian of his twelve-year-old son, John. Cantacuzenus could not understand their ingratitude. He knew that he had ability of a sort that had in the past rendered Byzantium many services, and the exemption of his class from all criticism prevented him from realising that the technical accomplishment of diplomacy is not the same thing as statesmanship. With sublime dignity and the full authority of a conscience that his autobiography brings to the reader's eye in the likeness of an immense and tasteless building, he started the civil war again by crowning himself Emperor and claiming the executive power from the child Emperor John and his mother, Anne of Savoy. There followed thirteen years of the most painful disorder, which Cantacuzenus saw as a series of triumphs for his own dexterity, as indeed they were if they were considered individually, without regard to their cumulative effect in murdering the Byzantine Empire.

During this time Cantacuzenus turned constantly to neighbouring states for aid, and conducted his negotiations with them on the highest imaginable plane of tact and discretion. These greatly expedited the collapse of civilisation in South-East Europe, for his neighbours required order in Byzantium for the sake of the common front they had to form against the

Turks, and they could not be certain whether this could better be guaranteed by Cantacuzenus or by the Empress Anne, and they too vacillated and added to the confusion. Later, he gave a disastrous exhibition of his virtuosic talents in his achievement of an alliance with Orkhan, the chief of the Ottoman Turks. Nothing could have been more expert. But it brought the Turks to Europe in numbers that made it impossible ever to expel them again; and when he gave his daughter in marriage to Orkhan he weakened the clear picture of the antithesis between the Christian Byzantines and the Islamic Turks which should have been preserved at all costs in the minds of his own people and the West.

Finally Cantacuzenus set the seal on his adept and imbecile achievements by ingeniously making peace with the Emperor John, who was now a young man, on condition that there were two emperors and three empresses—himself, young John, his mother Anne of Savoy, Cantacuzenus's wife and his daughter, whom he had induced young John to marry—and that he himself reserved the right to be sole ruler for the next ten years. It was certainly a masterpiece of diplomacy to get this agreement signed, but he must have been powerfully aided by the exhaustion he had brought on his country. Civil war had so depredated the state that even the court, which had not long before amazed the world, was stripped of its gold and jewels. At the wedding feast of the Emperor John and Cantacuzenus's daughter, royalty and nobles alike adorned themselves with gilt leather and coloured glass, and the toasts were drunk from tin and lead.

But the defence of humanity against its Cantacuzenuses is its quick resilience. As soon as the truce between the two combatants had given the country a breathing-space, the young John rebelled and brought in Genoese help, and was supported by most of his subjects. Cantacuzenus's response was to make his son Matthew emperor in John's stead; he knew that what the country really needed was one more of a family who knew how to do things. At this point the Byzantines at last lost patience. They turned on him as one man and ran him into a monastery. In the most graceful fashion imaginable he accepted the situation, took his vows, and, since his attentions had been insufficiently appreciated here on earth, transferred them with unabated self-confidence to the next world. He spent the

many remaining years of his life in fomenting the spiritual equivalent of civil war by writing ingenious treatises against Jews and Mohammedans. It was characteristic of him that first he ably invited the Turks to Europe, where they had no business to be, and then as ably assailed them for the ideas which they had every right to hold.

This Conservative politician, shining smooth, smooth as water as it slips over the lip of a precipice, came to Prishtina at a time when he should have been doubtful about his fate, being a new-fledged and not popularly acclaimed usurper ; and indeed he was diffident as a Member of Parliament who for the sake of holding office has just crossed the floor of the House. He perhaps never knew a deeper diffidence. The town he entered, the town in which Constantine and my husband and I were lunching, was then very proud. It was built of wood, which some historians have mentioned as proof that it was primitive ; but the Slav, like the Scandinavian, always builds in timber when he can, and the Mediterranean habit of using stone was determined by the lack of forest and the abundance of quarries in the south. Between the wooden houses the Serbian nobles and their ladies rode out to meet him, themselves handsome in red cloaks lined with fur and embroidered in gold, and their horses as handsome with silver trappings, often brought from Venice. They were not greatly divided by their Slavdom from their visitor. Many of them spoke Greek, and to Stephen Dushan it was as a second mother-tongue, since he had lived in Constantinople from his eighth to his fifteenth year ; and the protocol of the court was definitely Byzantine, which pleased Cantacuzenus very much.

It was the Serb custom, he tells us, that when an eminent foreigner came to visit their king they both descended from their horses and the foreigner kissed his host on his face and breast. But Stephen Dushan ordered that when Cantacuzenus came he was to be greeted as he would have been within his own empire ; so all the nobles dismounted as soon as they saw him in the distance and when he approached them they stepped forward to kiss his knee where it was crooked against the saddle. Then he was taken to the palace, and was received very graciously by the Emperor and Empress, and when it was time for banqueting he was taken into a great hall and set at a table in a chair higher than Stephen Dushan's own. Byzan-

tine though he was, this banquet impressed him. The nobles and their ladies wore their ceremonial costume of green or yellow tunics, studded with diamonds and precious stones and the cut gems of ancient Greece, and belted with silver and gold. The men carried magnificent daggers and wore jewelled rings and bracelets and crosses suspended from the neck, and the women were crowned with intricately wrought diadems of gold and silver, from which fine chains ran down to take part of the weight of their immense and gorgeous earrings. To the music of flutes they drank great quantities of mead and wine, and ate game and venison and fish which had come in snow from the Danube, with many kinds of vegetables and fruits and sheep's milk and honey ; and there was also about the table the orchestral murmur of a great cosmopolitan court. Many Italians and Spanish and Asiatics had come to Serbia to seek their fortune, and Stephen Dushan had for his personal guard a company of German soldiers, in imitation of the Byzantine Emperor's famous Varangian guard of Scandinavians and English. But Cantacuzenus was not more impressed by the wealth and cosmopolitan quality of the court than by its fine and formal manners. He was hardly ever suffered, he says, to remain alone in his tent. Nearly every day Stephen Dushan sent a deputation of the most distinguished old nobles and the most charming young pages, to beg him to come to the palace and give the court more of his delightful company ; and when Cantacuzenus obeyed the summons Stephen Dushan would come to meet his guest at the door of his great apartment, and sometimes even at the place where he dismounted.

When enough time had passed to satisfy the convention that there was nothing behind the visit save pure sociability, Stephen Dushan asked Cantacuzenus whether he had come to ask any favour of him, and expressed the hope that if this were so he would be able to accede. Cantacuzenus answered by a reference to the myth of the gods gone avisting, and said that he had come to gain Stephen Dushan's friendship, since the wise esteemed nothing so highly as a faithful friend. But he went on to admit that he sought his host's aid in restoring order to the Byzantine Empire. He added that if Stephen Dushan did not want to help him he would like to be told so at once, in order that he could look for other means of salvation ; and one perceives in his account of his own conversation how clever a



performing flea he was. He made his appeal in terms that enmeshed Stephen Dushan by the twin assumptions that they were gentlemen talking together, and that the one who altered the tone of the conversation from the tenor determined by himself would prove himself no gentleman, and by a strong hint that if help were refused the refusal would be taken as proceeding from impotence.

This last suggestion Stephen Dushan, whose security depended largely on his prestige, could not let pass. He had soldiers enough to give Cantacuzenus all the help he needed, he said, if Cantacuzenus proved that he really wanted it. Cantacuzenus expressed wonder at the phrase. What proof could be necessary? Stephen Dushan replied that he could believe in Cantacuzenus's desire for help if he handed over to the Serbian crown all the towns of Thrace: that is to say, on the Greek seaboard east of Salonica. It was in fact not an exorbitant demand. The inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire were by this time mostly Slav and not Greek, so there was no racial reason why the Serbs and Bulgars and Byzantines should not coalesce, and it was imperative that the territory should fall under the shield of a strong government. Often aggressors have justified their thefts on such grounds, but here in South-East Europe, in the middle of the fourteenth century, they happened to be valid. Ungoverned towns on the seaboard meant a door unlocked to the robbers from the Catholic West.

Cantacuzenus answered Stephen Dushan very much as an English diplomat of the worst old type might speak to an American who was being tiresome about the debt settlement. The theme of gentlemanliness was recapitulated with frosty delicacy. "You speak very reasonably," he told him, "concerning the reward you want; for there is no wise man who does not expect a return when he goes to trouble and expense. So, if your instinct does not tell you that you ought to help me as an act of grace, you are right to ask me to buy your assistance. But if I buy it and pay for it, I shall be under no obligation to you, for who pays for what he buys feels under no obligation to the seller. But if you help me out of generous friendship, and out of ambition of a sort honourable to a sovereign, it will be a glory to you to have taken up arms for such noble motives, and not from greed, as low natures would. Moreover," he added, "if you have me as a friend while I enjoy the imperial power,

you will possess all that I possess, since everything is shared among friends, as the philosophers say." He had made perfect use of his technique ; he was now to show his perfect blindness to reality. " If your offer of help is conditional on the surrender of the towns you claimed, say so frankly," he ended coldly, " so that I can make other arrangements. For I swear to you that I will never surrender a single town ; but I will guard them all as I have guarded my own children." They were not his children ; they could not be guarded so long as he pretended they were.

Stephen Dushan then fell into a transport of rage, which must have been impressive enough. Foreigners who visited his court describe him as " the tallest of all men of his time ", and a fresco portrait shows him sinewy, with black eyes burning over high cheek-bones. There was reason in his rage against Cantacuzenus, for the usurper was in his weakness a threat to the peace of the whole Balkan world. But Stephen Dushan was calmed by his wife, the Empress Helen, and he consented to summon the Diet of twenty-four of his most important nobles and discuss the issue with them. There an important part was played by Helen, in a fashion illustrating the ambivalence with which men regard women. They love them and they hate them ; they pamper them and ill-treat them ; and women are at once slaves and freer than men. In medieval Serbia women must have been chattels, for their evidence was not accepted in the law courts ; and such a rule always implies that no woman is sufficiently assured of protection by society to risk giving evidence that has not been dictated to her by some man. Yet the Empress Helen was able to rise in the Diet and make a long speech urging a rejection or at least a modification of her husband's policy, in terms which suggest that she was accustomed to using her mind vigorously and without fear.

This speech was extremely able. She affirmed that the Serbs were under no obligation to consider Cantacuzenus's interests before their own, but warned them to judge carefully what was best for them. In cryptic phrases, which we now know to have referred to an offer made by Anne of Savoy to hand over an immense slice of Byzantine territory in return for Cantacuzenus alive or dead, she repudiated the possibility of harming their guest. That, she said, would be a crime displeasing to men and odious to God. She believed that they should aid Cantacuzenus ;

for he had in the past proved himself an able governor, and if he regained imperial power might be a dangerous enemy. She suggested that the price they should ask of him for their aid should be not new towns but recognition of their claim to the towns which they and their ancestors had already taken from the Byzantines. With shrewdness greater than was recognised by Cantacuzenus, she pointed out that he would probably accept these conditions since the loss of these towns brought no personal disgrace on him.

The Empress convinced both the Diet and her husband. Stephen Dushan made a speech and thanked her for her care for his people, and then went to Cantacuzenus and said, smiling, "You have won, you have persuaded us to undertake all sorts of hardships and trials for your sake." When Cantacuzenus heard Helen's proposals he accepted them eagerly and sat down happily to turn out more of his exquisitely accomplished paper-work. But his fortune was crumbling so fast that the basis of the treaty altered between its drafting and its signing. A military adventurer who was straddling the border between Serbia and Byzantium, acknowledging the allegiance of now one and now the other according to their fortunes, took another Byzantine town and hastened to drop it into Stephen Dushan's lap. It was an ill omen. The fellow was an infallible barometer, and since it was his opinion that Cantacuzenus meant nothing, that probably was his real value, and alliance with him was of no service to Serbia. But Stephen Dushan went on with the treaty, insisting merely that the town should be added to the list of his possessions and the adventurer should be declared his subject, though Cantacuzenus fought hard to keep them under his impotence. Then the twenty-four members of the Diet were called together and told, by an admirable form of parliamentary procedure which has been insufficiently imitated, that since they had decided that military aid should be given to Cantacuzenus they must now provide it, and twenty of them were sent off at the head of troops with orders to obey their new general in all things. They must have left Stephen Dushan reflecting, as Elizabeth was so often forced to do, that no man has any reliable ally save in his own right hand.

Eight years later Cantacuzenus and Stephen Dushan met again : a long way from Prishtina, outside Salonica. By this time Cantacuzenus was far advanced in his competent and

complacent pursuit of destruction, and Stephen Dushan had pushed out his strength to north, south, east and west, gathering to himself mastery of the Balkans. He had made Skoplje a great city, and there he had been crowned one Easter Sunday Emperor and Autocrat of the Serbs and Byzantines, the Bulgars and the Albanians. His upbringing in Constantinople had always profoundly influenced the etiquette of his palace, and now he lived in an exact imitation of the Byzantine court; he had assumed the tiara and used the double eagle as his emblem, and his officials were called by the names borne by their originals in Byzantium, Sebastocrator and Grand Logothete, Grand Domestic and Sacellary. The imitation went deeper than nomenclature. He was not, of course, wholly free from care. When Cantacuzenus, in a last ill-considered effort to reclaim territory which he could not hold, had marched against him he had found it far from child's-play to repel the attack, for his Catholic enemies had stabbed him in the back on the Bosnian frontier. But he was magnificent, imperially magnificent. The land he stood on as he faced Cantacuzenus was to its further distances his, or about to become his, drawn to him by the magnetism of his true power, which all others lacked.

He had first to resist Cantacuzenus's reproaches of perfidy. Like Elizabeth he awoke in his enemies an indignant sense that they had had to deal with an infinity of cunning and trickery; but any animal will run like a fox if it is hunted like a fox. Unquestionably he had broken treaties he had made with Cantacuzenus, but the alteration in the two men's status must have made it difficult to observe them. It would be hard to execute a document signed by a living man and a phantom. The further rights and wrongs of this dispute cannot be judged, for at this stage of his memoirs Cantacuzenus had arrived at a decision, not unfamiliar in autobiography, that he could only be fair to himself by lying. But he tells us something of Stephen Dushan which we can believe because it is not credible. It struck the unimaginative Cantacuzenus as so odd that he put it down in the hope of discrediting his successful rival. He says that in the midst of their open conference, in the hearing of all the Byzantines and Serbs, Stephen Dushan suddenly confessed that he was very greatly frightened of Cantacuzenus and his forces. Yes, he said, he feared them horribly. If the thought of them came to him as he slept, he woke in a sweat; if it came

to him before he slept, he stayed awake all night. This was a surprising note ; and it was struck again later in the conversation. Cantacuzenus asked him how he had come to lower himself by paying a certain state visit to Venice and making obeisances to the republic unsuitable in the ruler of a kingdom so much more mighty and extensive ; and he answered that he was well aware how much beneath his dignity his bearing had been, but fear had compelled him. He added that, considering what fear was, he wondered it had made him do nothing baser. Cantacuzenus naïvely said to himself that evidently he and the whole world had been acting on far too elevated a conception of Stephen Dushan's character, and forthwith demanded from him the return of all the Byzantine territory he had conquered.

Stephen Dushan was amazed by the suggestion. He had merely been discussing the nature of fear and the occasional sick fancies to which he, like all born of woman, was subject ; he had not had the slightest intention of acting weakly. It is as if a Dostoevsky character came marching to us through Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*. There could be no more curious proof of the identity of the Slav character through the ages, for he was plainly giving rein to the desire that governs the Slav of to-day, the desire to know the whole. Finding himself at the extremity of a condition, he leaned out of his destiny towards its opposite, trying to understand that also. Had he been defeated and hopeless, he would have talked of triumph till his hearers would have wondered at his boasting. So it was natural for him to explore his potentialities for terror, since though danger still threatened him, it seemed that he had found a formula for its control.

The core of his power was his great strength, which enabled him to support the delicacy of his Slav mind. He was apparently a man of the explosive but easy temper which goes with perfect health and exceptional vitality. A glimpse of his habitual being is given in that part of the Acts of the Saints which deals with St. Peter Thomas, a curiously stupid and tactless person who was very unsuitably employed as a Papal Legate. He was sent to the Serbian court to labour for its conversion, but for some mysterious reason refused to make the usual obeisance on being received by the Emperor. Not unnaturally Stephen Dushan was carried away by rage, and he forbade the Roman Catholics about the court to attend a Mass at which the Legate

was to officiate on the following day, on pain of having their eyes put out. St. Peter Thomas interpreted this to mean that he ran the risk of being killed, though blinding, which was a recognised penalty borrowed by the Serbs from the Byzantines, never entailed death. But he went ahead and celebrated the Mass, which was attended by many of the German guards and other Catholic courtiers. It was a singularly graceless act on their part, for there was complete religious freedom in the Serbian Empire, and they could have attended any Mass save that celebrated by the priest who had insulted their Emperor. But when Stephen Dushan sent for them, and they told him they were prepared to lose their lives as well as their eyes for their faith, he was shaken by sudden laughter and let them go unpunished as a reward for their spirit ; and he treated St. Peter Thomas for the rest of his stay with a special courtesy.

There shines through the story a reluctance to waste time on hatred and compulsion which is characteristic of Stephen Dushan. That may seem an odd testimonial to give a parricide ; yet even that vast initial crime has aspects that warn us not to judge it as if it were a piece of our age. When Stephen Dushan murdered his father he neither killed nor imprisoned nor even exiled his stepmother. Six years afterwards he married her to the despot John Oliver and gave her a large dowry, including the Sheep's Field and the town of Veles ; and documents in which he called her his " well-beloved mother " show that in the meantime she had been a respected figure at his court. We ask ourselves in vain how it can have been done, how the persons involved found it possible to go on breathing when they were in the same room, so great their reciprocity of fear and shame. But the situation is not shocking compared with Tudor practice, for Lady Jane Grey might well have sighed for some Nemanyan tolerance ; and any comparison with the practice of modern times, though it would have been to our advantage thirty years ago, becomes less so with the dawning of each day. It cannot be doubted that if Stephen Dushan failed to achieve the millennium it was not because he lacked the appetite for it. Like most of us, he would have used the means if he had known what they were.

He liked life to take its own course. There was nothing totalitarian or xenophobic about his régime. His people showed a reluctance to trade in towns and work in mines, preferring,

very reasonably, to farm their fat lands. Their sovereign let them have their way, and brought in Venetians and Ragusans as traders and Saxons as miners, and treated them well. We know exactly how his mind ran on these and many other matters, for he left behind him a legal code comprising nearly two hundred articles. This is a very creditable achievement, which brought up to date the laws made by the earlier kings of the Nemanyan dynasty and was in sum a nicely balanced fusion of Northern jurisprudence and the Byzantine system laid down by Justinian. It coped in an agreeable and ingenious spirit with the needs of a social structure not at all to be despised even in comparison with the West.

There, at this time, the land was divided among great feudal lords who ruled over innumerable serfs; but here in Serbia there were very few serfs, so few that they formed the smallest class in the community, and there was a large class of small free landowners. There was a National Diet which met to discuss such important matters as the succession to the throne or the outbreak of civil war, and this consisted of the sovereigns, their administrators, the great and small nobility and the higher clergy; it was some smaller form of this designed to act in emergencies that met to discuss whether John Cantacuzenus should receive Serbian aid. All local government was in the hands of the whole free community, and so was all justice, save for the special cases that were reserved for royal jurisdiction, such as high treason, murder and highway robbery. This means that the people as a whole could deal with matters that they all understood, while the matters that were outside common knowledge were settled for them by their sovereign and selected members of their own kind; for there were no closed classes, and both the clergy and the nobility were constantly recruited from the peasantry.

Against the military difficulties that constantly beset Stephen Dushan there could be counted the security of this possession: a country rich in contented people, in silver and gold, in grain and cattle, in oil and wine, and in the two traditions, one Byzantine and mellow, one Slav and nascent, which inclined its heart towards civilisation. Here was plenty, and a plentiful spirit: with a gesture that recalls our own Tudor age, when a gentleman leaving his country house for some months would leave orders that all visitors should be well entertained in his

absence, Stephen Dushan ordered that all foreign envoys travelling through the land should be given all the meat and drink they desired at the imperial expense. As he pressed southward into Byzantine territory he restored to it elements necessary to civilised life which it had almost forgotten. He was not in need of money, so he did not need to rob his new subjects after the fashion of participants in the Civil War; he taxed them less, repaired gaps in their strongholds, and lent them Serbian soldiers as police. He also practised the principle of toleration, which was very dear to the Byzantine population; it must be remembered that the Orthodox crowd of Constantinople rushed without hesitation to defend the Saracen merchants' mosque when it was attacked by the fanatic Latin knights. There could be no complete application of this principle, and Stephen Dushan certainly appointed Serbian governors to rule over his new territories, as well as Serbian ecclesiastics when the local priests were irreconcilable; but he left the indigenous social and political systems just as he found them, and there was no economic discrimination against the conquered.

It was as if there were falling down the map from the Serbian Empire an ooze of honey, runnels of wine. They must drip across Byzantium, they must spread all over the country to the sea, to the Bosphorus. To all men's minds it became possible that some day Stephen Dushan might come to Constantinople and that he might be Emperor not only of the Byzantines but of Byzantium, seated at its centre in the palace that had known Constantine the Great and Justinian. There are many reasons why he should not have succeeded in this enterprise. It would have been hard to capture Constantinople without a fleet, and Stephen Dushan could neither develop maritime power nor persuade the short-sighted Republic of Venice to enter into an alliance with him for the sake of his aid against the Turks. But there were many reasons why he should not have been able to found the empire that he did; the cards stacked against him by his neighbours on every frontier made any further extension of territory seem impracticable. But even so the end of our Queen Elizabeth's reign could not have been foretold at its beginning. It is chiefly Russian nineteenth-century historians, pro-Bulgar and anti-Serb, who allege that Stephen Dushan could not have reached Constantinople. His own age, and those who lived within recollection of its glory, believed him capable of that



journey, and more. He would have found it a poor place ; it had been stripped of its wealth by the civil wars, its population had been wasted by the first onslaughts of the plague, its valuable harbour was in the hands of loutish Italians who seized its commerce and insulted those they had robbed. Those who knew him trusted him to restore its splendour, which would have been to perform a miracle. He might have achieved deeds more miraculous still. He might have saved Europe from the Turks ; he must, in any case, have held them in check and given Europe a longer time to arm herself. It might have been that Hungary need never have had her hundred and fifty years of Turkish tyranny, and Vienna need never have been besieged, and then that abomination of abominations, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, need never have been founded. Our night would have been less black, and our glory far more glorious.

But Stephen Dushan died. In the forty-ninth year of his life, at a village so obscure that it is not now to be identified, he died, in great pain, as if he had been poisoned. Because of his death many disagreeable things happened. For example, we sat in Prishtina, our elbows on a tablecloth stained brown and puce, with chicken drumsticks on our plates meagre as sparrow-bones, and there came towards us a man and a woman ; and the woman was carrying on her back the better part of a plough. Here, where women had worn diadems of gold and silver, and the Empress had spoken her fine mind before the respect of the Diet, where the worth of womanhood had been so generally conceded that a painter could treat it passionately in his frescoes and assume the sympathy of his audience, this woman had walked a great distance by the side of her husband, bearing a heavy burden, while he went free

It could be seen that they had made a long journey, for their sandals and woollen stockings were white with dust, and though she was of my own sturdy pack-horse build, a blue shadow of fatigue lay across her mouth. Her husband went up to the hotel-keeper, who was leaning against the door, and had a long talk with him, while she stood and looked at us. She could not sit down because of the long iron blade that was bound to her back and ran from above her head down to her knees. It was apparent that neither she nor her husband felt any embarrassment at the sight they presented. They had smug and serious faces, and would not, I think, have done anything

that was not approved by the community ; indeed, when he tied the ploughshare to her they were both automatically carrying out a custom which nobody in their world had ever criticised, without any intention of unkindness on the one side or resentment on the other. It was not as if she were a middle-aged woman against whom her husband might have turned as she had lost her sexual value, for she was in her early twenties, and showed a certain handsomeness ; and there looked to be a steady though dull good-humour between them.

It may be said that if that were so, that if she and her husband were contented and the community were not shocked, there was no reason for strangers to become excited. In Prishtina it could be seen that this was not true. Any area of unrestricted masculinism, where the women are made to do all the work and are refused the right to use their wills, is in fact disgusting, not so much because of the effect on the women, who are always taught something by the work they do, but because of the nullification of the men. This Kossovo peasant was strong and upstanding, but he had the pulpy look of a eunuch, and this was not unnatural, for he had resigned from the sphere of effort. He had expected the woman to do everything, to produce the next generation and to do all the work for this one ; he had left not enough of the task over for himself. Though the woman was not so null, she had a displeasing air of essential slovenliness which cancelled the superficial neatness of her black dress and orange kerchief. She had grown careless of her womb. She had forgotten that she must use herself delicately, not out of pride or cowardice, but because her body was an instrument of the race. Life, that should have proceeded from these people, running ahead to conquer the next stage of time, dragged behind them like a shadow cast on mud. Yet people here had once known all that we know, and more, but the knowledge had died after the death of Stephen Dushan, it had been slain on the field of Kossovo.

The pair moved off into the sunlight, high coloured and well fleshed, hollow with stupidity. I went upstairs to the lavatory. Open doors in the corridor showed me bedrooms monastic in cleanliness and austerity, with iron bedsteads, flimsy washstands and enamelled ewers and basins, and bare boards scrubbed white by the secret process the gipsies use. In one room a kilted Albanian lay on the bed, staring at the ceiling

and counting on his fingers. The lavatory was of the old Turkish kind: that is to say, it was a small room paved with stone, with a round hole in the floor near one wall, and a tap not far away. The whole floor was wet. Everybody who used the place must go out with shoes stained with urine. It was an unlovable apartment. The dark hole in the floor, and something hieratic in the proportions of the place, made it seem as if dung, having been expelled by man, had set itself up as a new and hostile and magically powerful element that could cover the whole earth with dark ooze and sickly humidity. There came on me the panic that bad sanitation can sometimes arouse even in the most hardened travellers. I felt as if the place were soiling me with filth which I would never be able to wash off because it was stronger in its essence than mere mild soap and water.

I went downstairs and said to my husband, who was standing outside the hotel looking at a piece of orange cloth, "In Byzantine Constantinople there was an abundant water supply, and we know from the charters of the hospitals that they had elaborate bathrooms and lavatories." He answered, "My poor dear, I was afraid it would be like that. But look at this. I went over to the shops to see if I could buy you a local handkerchief, but this is all they use." It was a square of poorly woven cloth with a machine-stitched hem; at eight-inch intervals there were knotted through the hem wispy skeins of four or five orange threads, about three inches long, which were as poor attempts at decoration as have ever been made. "They say one can buy good embroideries in the town, there is a well-known woman who sells them," said my husband, "but this is what most of the women wear. They are the plainest things we have found anywhere. They say the people here are so poor they have no wool to spare to make things for themselves, they have lost the habit of ornament."

### *Plain of Kossovo II*

As we got into the automobile Constantine made a face at some scented rags of meadowsweet, a few rose-petals, that had fallen from the dead flowers I had thrown away before lunch. "That I cannot understand," he said, "that you pretend to love beautiful things, and yet you pick flowers though you know

they must wither and die, and will have to be thrown away." "Why not?" I asked. "There were hundreds of others where these grew, so nobody would miss them, and we all enjoyed them for two or three hours." He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Oh, well, if that is your point of view, it is your point of view." Then, huddling down in his place, he threw back his head and sat with his eyes shut and a contemptuous smile on his lips. "You are very different from my wife," he said. "She is a mystic, she would rather dance round a wayside flower than pluck it. But that you would not understand, for you English are not tender." My baser part silently remarked that Gerda could not have danced round a wayside flower without inflicting the most untender damage on the surrounding growth. I thought also of her hatred of the gipsy boys and girls who were like flowers. "She is as tender as the Turks were," I said to myself, "the Turks who loved nature, who slaughtered human kind," and we sat dumb as the road rose out of the trench where Prishtina lies, looking back at the new white-washed Government buildings that protrude square as a set chin among the shapeless lumber of the old town, or forward to the dark green of the plains. The close opaque texture of the grass gave them an artificial look, as if they had been prepared for a special purpose, like our race-tracks and golf-courses, or that mound at Silbury which our prehistoric ancestors put to some unknown use.

I tried to deny its flat, monotonous boast of irreparable damage done to our kind. I pretended that perhaps very little had been destroyed here, since if Slav culture had been a reality the Serbian Empire would not have fallen to pieces in the thirty-four years between the death of Stephen Dushan and the battle of Kossovo. That is the opinion of the anti-Serb historians; they point out that within a short time his empire had dissolved into its constituent parts, so that the Turks were faced not by a united people, but by a loose federation of feudal barons and their followers. But as I resorted to repeating it I knew it was nonsense. England might have passed into a disabling period of faction fights if Elizabeth had died at forty-eight instead of seventy; and there were many reasons why Serbia was specially liable to such disorders.

One proceeded from a genetic fatality that has been largely responsible for the unstable character of civilisation. Stephen

Dushan had begotten, as great men sometimes do, a son that was a faint echo of his father's genius ; of a like rarity and fineness, but without the needed volume and force. Though Stephen Urosh was only nineteen when he came to the throne, his limitations had already been recognised. It seems certain that his able mother, the Empress Helen, did not want him to assume power. For a time she transacted the imperial business herself, even to commanding the armies in the field, and even after she had retired to the cloister as the nun Elizabeth she continued to administer a certain amount of territory. Eight years after Stephen Dushan's death the Byzantine Emperor John became anxious for an alliance with Serbia against the Turks, and sent his Patriarch to arrange the necessary preliminary step of arranging for the repeal of the excommunication he had pronounced against the Serbian Church. It was to the Empress in her convent that the mission addressed itself. It is typical of the fitful and distracted spirit of the age that when this mission was aborted by the death of the Patriarch on the road, no step was taken to send out another.

A further reason for the collapse of Serbia was a calamity which ravaged the country shortly after Stephen Dushan's death and would have shaken the authority of any successor, no matter however able. It is described as a famine which killed many men ; and it can be identified as an attack of the form of plague then devouring the population of Constantinople. Such an epidemic left vast areas of farm-lands under-cultivated, destroyed centres of craftsmanship, and annihilated foreign trade. This catastrophe must have affected the Empire, which by this time had enjoyed the happiest expansion for three-quarters of a century, as the slump of 1929 affected the United States. In those days, when economic theory had hardly begun to be formulated and was wholly beyond the comprehension of ordinary man, material discontents often expressed themselves in theological or dynastic disputes quite irrelevant to the hardships experienced.

The Byzantines of that age vented their misery in the controversy of the Zealots ; but the Serbs were artists rather than intellectuals, and they preferred to dispute about the seen. They therefore wrangled about their rulers. It would have been far better if they had discussed whether the divine light of the Transfiguration could have been apprehended by the

corporeal eye, for that could only have gratified the vanity of the unseen powers, and Serbia had to be very careful of disturbing the seen powers. For it was still creating its nobility, that is to say its administrative class, by means which demanded an acknowledged authority. We realise this in learning that when a noble was given a military or civil charge he was given by the sovereign arms and a war-horse ; and when he died these or new ones had to be handed back to the sovereign, who decided whether to return them to a son of the dead man or to confer them on another family. This required a monarch of almost ecclesiastical authority whose will was sacred law. If he vacillated in the many decisions of a like personal nature which he had to make, a crowd of feudal barons would press in on him, disputing his title to domination and then claiming it for themselves. It has always been the special tragedy of Slav communities that at any moment of crisis they can furnish not too few but far too many men capable of taking charge of affairs.

In the first few years of Stephen Urosh's reign there were quite a number of aspirants to his power. There was his mother ; his father's brother Simeon, and his son-in-law ; two brothers Uglyesha and Vukashin, formerly his cupbearer and marshal, who rebelled against him and stole large portions of his land ; and there were several lesser chieftains, including some vigorous personalities who fell on Bulgaria and partitioned it. For some time before the battle of Kossovo all these rivals had been obscured. Stephen Urosh was driven into exile and murdered, and presently the fame of his gentleness made the faithful speak of miracles at his tomb. It was of him that the Russian monk had said to us at the monastery of Yazak in the Frushka Gora, "No, there is nothing interesting here, only the body of a Serbian emperor." Vukashin and Uglyesha were killed leading their armies against the Turks, Vukashin at the hand of a treacherous servant. Of the others those who were not obliterated by natural death or military failure were outshone by two princes of conspicuous ability.

One was Tvrtko, King of Bosnia, an offshoot of the Nemanya family, who had seized a great part of Dalmatian and Serbian territory ; the other was Prince Lazar, the same Lazar whose brown defeated hand I touched at Vrdnik, who was lord of the northern and eastern Serbian lands. Tvrtko had shown signs of military genius and Lazar could claim at least a high

degree of military efficiency. In the pact they signed for the sake of maintaining Slav unity against the Turks they showed considerable statesmanship. The quality of these two men suggests that the decadence of the Serbian Empire after the death of Stephen Dushan was only the trough that follows a great wave, and that a wave as great might have succeeded it. The historians, in trying to prove that Balkan Christian civilisation was already self-doomed before its destruction, are moved by a snobbish and pusillanimous desire not to speak ill of the Old Squire, destiny. It is probable that the battle of Kossovo deducted as much from civilisation as the sum of England after the Tudor age.

It was a painful thought, implying that the world we have embarked on is a leaky ship and may not keep afloat. I did not want to get out of the automobile when Constantine said, "See, now we must walk and I will show you all things of our tragedy." But when I stood on the road I felt nothing. I saw before me simply green downs like those that lie along some Wiltshire valleys, and a high silver sky which took all foreignness from the scene, since it made the snow ranges on the horizon look like shining bars of cloud ; some winding roads and lanes, and some scattered buildings. Nothing that had happened here was present to me. At Grachanitsa I had seen medieval Serbia in its living guise as the visitor may see the Tudors at Hampton Court or Frederick the Great at Potsdam ; but the armies that had waited here on the eve of St. Vitus' Day in 1389 were not even ghosts to me, they were words out of a book. Nothing could be more agreeable than to be so exempt. I remembered how I had dreaded the first anniversary of the most disagreeable event that had ever befallen me, and how I had awakened on the day and felt nothing, absolutely nothing. I walked away from the automobile towards a tuft of pinkish-purple flowers that grew about a hundred yards away, enjoying the cool, freely flowing air of the uplands, and I did not turn round when Constantine called to me. But Dragutin ran after me, and said slowly, in order that I might understand, "Like a child, like a child." He put his hand flat two or three feet above the ground, and with the other pointed to Constantine. "Like a child he is, but he has a bad wife. Come to the hill, it is very interesting. Do not mind him."

"No, no, it is not that," I said, but I could not explain, so I

followed him across the grass, and we joined my husband and Constantine, who were on a path running up a little hill, on the top of which was a whitewashed hexagonal building, surmounted by a grey-blue metallic dome. Around it the turf was pierced here and there with the white toppling poles of Moslem tombs, and there were some wild rose bushes and a fruit tree, hung with brown wreaths of dead blossom. Out of the folds of what had seemed an empty landscape there emerged suddenly a number of people who converged on us just as we reached the building. There was a veiled woman, her black cotton garments made a strange ghostly colour by the heavy summer dust, gliding along with a baby in her arms and two little children at her heels, exhibiting a dark and slippery and un-individualised fecundity like caviare. There was a lean and wildish-looking man with a shepherd's staff; his cheeks so hollow that one might have thought he usually wore false teeth and had taken them out, were it not that his belly was as concave. There was a Christian girl of about fourteen who had better been veiled, for her face showed a fixed and empty stare of hunger, of appetite so completely starved that it was ignorant of its own object. She wore a skirt that was a straight piece of cloth gathered along one selvedge to form a waistband so that it stood out round her knees like a coarse version of the ballerina's toutou. There were several boys, all wearing the fez, all bandy. The veiled woman slipped with her children into the shabby porch of the octagonal building, and Constantine explained sententiously, "This is a holy place for them," and indeed she had the air of being on some errand which at once satisfied the motor impulses and the sense of duty, like shopping or calling, but more so, which Moslem women bring to their religious exercise. The man with the shepherd's staff stared at Dragutin with the admiration due to a very handsome man. The children held out to us bunches of flowers with an almost aristocratic lack of insistence, and Constantine said, "These are the famous poppies of Kossovo that grow nowhere else, they are supposed to have sprung from the blood of the slaughtered Serbs. Later the whole plain is red with them, but as you see it is too early for them, these are only buds." They were a very beautiful kind of wild peony, with golden centres and pink stamens. My husband bought some from the girl and Dragutin bought some from the boys; he was behaving at



Kossovo as he behaved at springs and in churches, with a mystical and soldierly excitement, like one who salutes the sacred spectre of valour.

Constantine began to tell us how the troops had been marshalled for the battle. Here Prince Lazar had had his tent, there the Turks had waited. "But no!" interrupted Dragutin. He was shouting slowly and without rage, as he did when moved by patriotic fervour. "How could they wait in the North-west! Not here, but there were they, the dogs! And there, over there, Vuk Brankovitch should have come in with his troops but turned away and left the battlefield!" "Vuk Brankovitch," said Constantine, "is the Judas of our story. He was the specially beloved brother-in-law of the Prince Lazar, and he is supposed to have sold himself to the Turks and to have led his army off the battlefield at a crucial moment, thus exposing Lazar's flank. But now historians do not think there was any treachery, though it seems likely that one of the Serbian princes did not receive a message in time telling him to go forward to Lazar's support, and so failed him. But we all know that it was not treachery that lost us Kossovo, it is that we were all divided among ourselves." "Yes," said Dragutin, "it is so in our songs, that we were betrayed by Brankovitch, but we know that it was not so, that we lost the battle because we were not of one mind." "How do you mean you know it?" I asked. "Do you mean you learned it at school?" "No," he said, "we know it before we go to school. It is something our people remember." I was again checked by the curious honesty of the Slav mind, by its refusal to dress up its inconsistencies and make them superficially acceptable to the rationalist censor. They had evolved a myth which accounted for their defeat by treachery within their own ranks and thereby took the sting out of it, just as the Germans did after the war; but they did not suppress the critical part of their mind when it pointed out to them that this myth was merely a myth. With an inconsistency that was not dangerous because it was admitted they let their myth and the criticism of it coexist in their minds.

Constantine and Dragutin waved their arms at the downland, and still I saw nothing. I turned aside and looked at the white building behind us and I said, "What is this place? Can we go in?" "Certainly, certainly," said Constantine, "it is very interesting; this is the mausoleum of Gazi Mestan, a

Turkish standard-bearer who was killed in the battle and was buried where he lay." "Yes," shouted Dragutin, "many of us fell at Kossovo, but, praise be to God, so did many of them." As we went into the wooden porch, the veiled woman and her children padded past us. We found ourselves in a room which, though light and clean, had that look of having been long disused by any normal forces which one expects to be completed by stuffed animals; but there was nothing there except two coffins of the Moslem type, with a gabled top, higher at the head than the heels. They were covered with worn green baize, and hung with cheap pieces of stuff, some clumsily embroidered, others printed. On the walls were a few framed scraps of Turkish calligraphy, a copy of a Sultan's seal, and some picture postcards. A man came towards us, smiling sweetly and indecisively. He wore a faded fez and neat but threadbare Western clothes, and his whole appearance made a wistful allusion to a state better than his own; I have seen his like in England, walking through November rain in a summer suit and a straw hat, still mildly cheerful. He told us of the fame and gallantry of Gazi Mestan in a set speech, unnaturally uttered from some brain-cell petrified by memory. "And you? Who are you?" said Constantine. "I am the descendant of Gazi Mestan's servant," the man answered, "the descendant in the sixteenth generation. My forefather was by him as he fell, he closed his dead master's eyes for him, he preserved his body and guarded it after it had been placed in this tomb. So have we all guarded him."

A weak-eyed boy ran into the room and took his stand beside the man, who laid an arm about his shoulder. "My brother," he said tenderly, and laid his face against the boy's fine lank hair. They looked incredibly fragile. If one had tapped them with a pebble on the paper-thin temples they would have dropped to the ground, still faintly smiling; the bare ankle-bones showing between the boy's brown shoes and frayed trouser-hems were so prominent that the skin stretched across them was bright red. "What do these people live on?" I asked. "Doubtless they receive gifts, this is a kind of shrine," said Constantine, "and there would probably be an allowance from the Vakuf, the Moslem religious endowment fund. In any case they can do nothing else, this is the family's destiny and it is a distinction." "But they are not like human beings

at all," I said, " they are to human beings what a ship inside a glass bottle is to a real boat." I saw before me what an empire which spreads beyond its legitimate boundaries must do to its subjects. It cannot spread its own life over the conquered areas, for life cannot travel too far from its source, and it blights the life that is native to those parts. Therefore it imprisons all its subjects in a stale conservatism, in a seedy gentility that celebrates past achievements over and over again. It could be seen what these people had been. With better bones, with more flesh, with unatrophied wills, they would have been Turks as they were in the great days of the past, or as they are in the Atatürk's Turkey, robust and gracious. But there they were sweet-sour phantoms, human wine gone to vinegar.

Outside we found Dragutin lying on the ground, the girl and the boys about him and a field mouse curled in his hand. " You do not want to go inside ? " asked Constantine. " No," he said. " That a Turk was alive and is dead is good news. But this one has been dead so long that the news is a bit stale. Hola ! " he roared, and opened his hand and the field mouse made a brown streak for safety. " Now I am to take you to the tomb of the Sultan Murad," he said, standing up, " but thank God we stop at a Christian monument first." It was some miles down the main road, a very plain cross set back in a fenced garden where irises and lupins and the first roses grew with an astounding profusion. It could be understood that Kossovo had really been fertile, that it had once supported many fat villages. The two soldiers who were guarding the monument came down to the gate to meet us, two boys in their earliest twenties, short and sturdy and luminous with health, their skins rose under bronze, their black eyes shining deep and their black hair shining shallow.

When I admired the garden one of them fell back and picked some flowers for me from a bed, not in the main avenue, lest the general effect should be spoiled, and Constantine said to the other one, " You are a Serb from the North, aren't you ? " He answered smiling, " Yes, I am from the North, I am from the same town as you, I am from Shabats." " What ! " exclaimed Constantine, looking like a baby that has seen its bottle. " Do you know me ? " " Which of us in Shabats does not know the great poet who sprang from our town ? " replied the soldier ; and I liked the people of Shabats, for I could see

from his face that they knew the best as well as the worst of Constantine, and revered him as well as mocked him. "But tell me," interrupted Dragutin, "is that other one not a Croat?" "Yes," he said, "he is from Karlovats." "Is it not hard to be here all day with a Croat?" "No, indeed," said the soldier, "it is most surprising how pleasant he is; he is my true friend, and he is a good soldier; I never would have believed it." "You don't say so!" said Dragutin. "I tell you," said Constantine, "there are many good Croats, and we Serbs must make friends with them." "So," said Dragutin.

We were silent for a time at the foot of the memorial which bore the appalling words, "To the heroes who fell for the honest cross, freedom, and the right of the people, 1389-1912, erected by the people of Prishtina". It made the head ache with its attempt to commemorate people who were utterly outside the scope of memory; slaves born of slaves, who made their gesture of revolt and died, isolated by their slavery from the weakest, furthest light and warmth of fame. When we turned our faces to the garden again, we found the other soldier standing beside us, holding out a bouquet that was like a bouquet on a fire-screen made for a court, that had form and a tune of colour. All Slavs, except those who become florists, have a natural genius for arranging flowers. After I had thanked him, Dragutin said, "Hey, Croat! You're a brave fellow. How do you like us Serbs?" "Very well, very well!" he answered smiling. "Everybody is kind to me here, and I had thought you were my enemies." "Eyah!" said Dragutin, twisting the lobe of the boy's ear, "We'll kill you all some day." The boy wriggled and laughed, and they all talked till we turned to go, and Dragutin gave the boy a great smack on the back, saying, "Well, you two, if you come to Skoplje, you'll find me at the Ban's garage, and maybe there'll be some paprikasch for you. You're what Yugoslavia needs." On this little ledge they met and clung together, on this cross-wide space from which the dark grasses of Kossovo had been driven back, they who had been born under different flags and had to beat down a wall of lies before they could smile at each other.

If the battle of Kossovo was invisible to me it was because it had happened too completely. It was because the field of Kossovo had wholly swallowed up the men who had awaited destiny in their embroidered tents, because it had become

sodden with their blood and now was a bog, and when things fell on it they were for ever lost. Constantine said, "Now I am taking you to the mausoleum of the Sultan Murad, who was commanding the Turkish forces and was killed the night before the battle by a Serb called Milosh Obilitch, who had been suspected of treachery by our people and wished to clear his name." The Sultan Murad or Amurath, was the son of Orkhan the Victorious and a Greek girl raped from her bridegroom's arms, whom the Turks called Nilufer, the Lotus Flower, and his records suggest an immoral attempt to create the kind of character admired by morality, for an astounding cruelty seems to have been introduced as an alloy to harden the soft gold of his voluptuous delight in all exercises of the mind and body. "His mausoleum," said Constantine, "was built where he fell."

A track led from the road across the opaque and lustreless pastureland characteristic of this place, to what looked like a deserted farmhouse. As we came to the gate in the farm paddock it was as if had been at the tomb of Gazi Mestan: the bare countryside exhaled people. They came to meet us at the gate, they whipped round the corners of the paddock, men in Western clothes who had the look of Leicester Square or Place Pigalle touts, not that they knew much or perhaps anything of infamy. The resemblance lay in their terrible desire to sell what they had, which since they had nothing caused them to make piteous claims to the possession of special knowledge, the power to perform unusual services. Their bare feet, treading softly on rag-bound leather sandals, pattered before us, beside us, behind us, as we followed a stone path across a grassy quadrangle. A house looked down on us, its broken windows stuffed with newspaper, its wall eczematous where the plaster lacked.

Through another gateway we came on a poor and dusty garden where the mausoleum stood. A fountain splashed from a wall, and there was nothing else pleasant there. The door of the mausoleum was peculiarly hideous; it was of coarse wood, painted chocolate-colour, and panes of cheap glass, all the wrong shape. Public libraries and halls in small provincial towns in England sometimes have such doors. Beyond was a rough lawn, cropped by a few miserable sheep, which was edged with some flowers and set with two or three Moslem graves which were of the handsome sort, having a slab as well

as a column at the top and bottom, but were riven across by time and neglect. On the grass sat some veiled women picnicking among their pretty, sore-eyed children, with the infinitely touching sociability of Moslem women, which reticently reveals a brave and frustrated appetite for pleasure, doling itself out crumbs and making them do. On a fence made of small sticks, defending a young tree from the sheep, hung a line of many-coloured rags, just recognisably garments that had been washed very clean. At least one of these women lived in a cottage so far from all other water that it was worth her while to bring her washing to the fountain; yet on these bare downs it could be seen there was no cottage for a mile or two.

We drew near to the hideous door of the mausoleum, and it was opened by an old man whom we knew to be an imam, a priest, only from the twist of white cloth about his fez; not in his manner was there any sign of sacred authority. He greeted us blearily and without pride, and we followed him, our touts padding behind us, into the presence of the Sultan Murad. The walls of his last lodging were distempered in drab and ornamented with abstract designs in chocolate, grey and bottle-green, such as Western plumbers and decorators loved to create in the latter half of the last century, and its windows were curtained with the intensely vulgar dark green printed velvet used in wagons-lits. In a sloping gabled coffin such as sheltered Gazi Mestan, but covered with velvet and votive offerings of stuffs by some halfpence costlier, lay Murad. His turban hung from a wooden pole at the head of the coffin, a dusty wisp. The priest turned blindish eyes on Constantine and told him something; after the telling his fishlike mouth forgot to close. "This old one is relating that only the Sultan's entrails are here," said Constantine, "the rest of him was taken away to Broussa in Turkey, but I do not know when." Even the most rational person might have expected that the priest would have shown some slight regret that this shrine held the entrails of the Sultan and not his heart or his head. But in the pale luminousness of his eyes and the void of his open mouth there was seated the most perfect indifference.

Two of the touts padded past us and sank mumbling into the prostration of a Moslem prayer, in the hope that we might gape and tip. It is impossible to have visited Sarajevo or Bitolj or even Skoplje, without learning that the Turks were in a real

sense magnificent, that there was much of that in them which brings man off his four feet into erectness, that they knew well that running waters, the shade of trees, a white minaret the more in a town, brocade and fine manners, have a usefulness greater than use, even to the most soldierly of men. They were truly aristocratic, they had prised up the clamp of necessity that fixes man with his belly close to the earth. Therefore it was painful to see these Turks to whom two full meals in succession were more remote objects of lust than the most fantastic luxuries had been to their forefathers, to whom rags and a dusty compound represented a unique refreshment. These mock devotions were disgusting not because they were prostitutions of a gallant religion, since that represented an invincible tendency of mankind, but because they were inspired by the hope of dinars far too few for any purchase worth making. I turned away ; and the tail of my eye caught the touts in a furtive movement betraying an absolute bankruptcy of the vital forces, an inability to make an effort except when financed by some expectation for that specific purpose. Once they saw they had not interested us they stopped their prostrations in mid-air, wearily straightened themselves, and shuffled after us into the paddock.

"It is silly to bring foreigners to see these old Turkish things," said Dragutin to Constantine. "Everything Turkish is now rotten and stinks like a dunghill. Look at these creatures that are more like rotten marrows than men, they ought to be in mausoleums themselves, their mothers must have been dead for years before they were born." His animal lack of pity was the more terrible because it was not even faintly malicious. We hurried out of the paddock, some of the touts gaining on us and pattering ahead, looking back at us with their terrible inexoritant expectancy. One could easily have become cruel to them. Beyond the gate Constantine led us along the plasterless walls till he found the spot where, it is said, the man who murdered Murad was put to death. "His name," he said, "was Milosh Obilitch ; but to tell you the truth it was not. It was Kobilitch, which means Brood-mare, for in those days our people, even in the nobility, did not have surnames but only Christian names and nicknames. But in the eighteenth century when all the world became refined it seemed to us that it was shameful to have a hero that was called Brood-mare, so we dropped the K, and poor Milosh was left with a name that meant

nothing at all and was never his. What he would have minded worse was that many people nowadays say we should not honour him at all, because he gained the Sultan's presence by a trick, by saying that he was a deserter and wished to join his enemies. He felt, and patriots still feel, that he had to clear his name in the eyes of his people from the suspicion of being a traitor, and that he had bought the right to play that trick on the Turks because he gave them his life in return."

"It is strange," I said, "that the Turks were not disorganised by the murder of their Sultan." "Nothing could have disorganised them," said Constantine, "they were superb, they had *superbia*, they were all as Mohammed would have had them, they were soldiers ready to submit to all discipline because they believed that they had been enlisted by God, who at the end of the world would be with them as their general." "Our Sir Charles Eliot," I said, "wrote of them that 'The Sultan may be a Roman Emperor, but every Turk is a Roman citizen with a profound self-respect and a sense not only of his duties, but of what is due to him.' " As I spoke I noticed that my husband was no longer walking beside me, and, as wives do, I looked round to see what the creature might be doing. He was some paces behind us, giving some dinars to the touts, who were taking them with a gentle, measured thankfulness, unabject in spite of their suppliance, which proved that what Eliot had said of them had once been true, though the total situation showed it to be now false. They stopped following us after that, and remained staring mildly after us, boneless as flames, their pale faces and dusty clothes dingy in the sunlight. They stood wide, wide apart on the dark grass of Kossovo, for their flesh was too poor to feel the fleshly desire to draw together. A people that extends its empire too far from its base commits the sin of Onan and spills its seed upon the ground.

We had not been driving very long when the road ran through a grove, and Dragutin brought the automobile to a halt. "Here we will eat," he said, holding the door open. "What do you mean?" asked Constantine. "Well, did you people not bring bread and wine and eggs from Skoplje?" asked Dragutin. "This is the best place to eat them, and it is high time too, for it is very late and the English are accustomed to meals at regular hours. So get you out and eat." "No, no," said Constantine, taking out his watch and shaking his head,



"we must push on to Kossovska Mitrovitsa, and it may be dark before we get there." "What are you talking about?" said Dragutin. "It is about three in the afternoon, this is May, and Kossovska Mitrovitsa is not two hours away. Step quickly, you must get out." He did not speak out of insolence, but in recognition that Constantine had suffered some sort of disintegrating change during the last few days, and that his judgment was not now to be trusted. Constantine looked at him in unresentful curiosity, as if to say, "Am I as bad as that?" and obeyed. Dragutin put out the rugs and the food on the grass and said, "There now, you can have fifteen minutes," and walked up and down the road in front of us, eating an apple. He called to me, "You don't much like being here." "No," I said, "it's too sad. And just now I have been thinking of the Vrdnik monastery in the Frushka Gora, where I saw the body of the Prince Lazar and touched his hand." "Ah, yes, the poor saint," said Dragutin, "they cut off his head because our Milosh Obilitch had killed their Sultan, though doubtless they would have done it anyway. They were wolves, it was their nature to shed gentler blood. Well, it could not be helped. We were not of one mind."

He took another mouthful of apple and munched himself down the road, and I said to Constantine, "It is strange, he does not blame the nobles for quarrelling among themselves." Constantine said thoughtfully, "No, but I do not think that is what he means." "But he says, 'we were not of one mind,' he has said it twice to-day, and in all the history books it is said that the Slavs were beaten at Kossovo because the various princes quarrelled among themselves. What else can he mean?" "It is true that our people always say that we were beaten because we were not of one mind, and it is true that there were many Slav princes before Kossovo, and that they all quarrelled, but I do not think that the phrase has any connection with that fact," said Constantine. "I think the phrase means that each individual Slav was divided in his attitude to the Turk, and it makes an allusion to our famous poem about the grey falcon." "I have never heard of it," I answered. Constantine stood up and called to Dragutin, who was now munching his way back to us, "Think of it, she has never heard of our poem about the grey falcon!" "Shame!" cried Dragutin, spitting out some pips, and they began chanting together:

"Poletio soko titsa siva,  
Od svetinye, od Yerusalisa,  
I on nosi titsu lastavitsu. . . ."

"I will translate it for you," said Constantine. "In your language I cannot make it as beautiful as it is, but you will see that at any rate it is not like any other poem, it is peculiar to us. . . .

There flies a grey bird, a falcon,  
From Jerusalem the holy,  
And in his beak he bears a swallow.

That is no falcon, no grey bird,  
But it is the Saint Elijah.  
He carries no swallow,  
But a book from the Mother of God.  
He comes to the Tsar at Kossovo,  
He lays the book on the Tsar's knees.  
This book without like told the Tsar :  
"Tsar Lazar, of honourable stock,  
Of what kind will you have your kingdom ?  
Do you want a heavenly kingdom ?  
Do you want an earthly kingdom ?  
If you want an earthly kingdom,  
Saddle your horses, tighten your horses' girths,  
Gird on your swords,  
Then put an end to the Turkish attacks,  
And drive out every Turkish soldier.  
But if you want a heavenly kingdom  
Build you a church on Kossovo ;  
Build it not with a floor of marble  
But lay down silk and scarlet on the ground,  
Give the Eucharist and battle orders to your soldiers,  
For all your soldiers shall be destroyed,  
And you, prince, you shall be destroyed with them."

When the Tsar read the words,  
The Tsar pondered, and he pondered thus :  
"Dear God, where are these things, and how are they !  
What kingdom shall I choose ?  
Shall I choose a heavenly kingdom ?  
Shall I choose an earthly kingdom ?  
If I choose an earthly kingdom,

## BLACK LAMB AND GREY FALCON

*An earthly kingdom lasts only a little time,  
But a heavenly kingdom will last for eternity and its centuries."*

The Tsar chose a heavenly kingdom,  
And not an earthly kingdom,  
He built a church on Kossovo.  
He built it not with floor of marble  
But laid down silk and scarlet on the ground.  
There he summoned the Serbian Patriarch  
And twelve great bishops.  
Then he gave his soldiers the Eucharist and their battle orders.

In the same hour as the Prince gave orders to his soldiers  
The Turks attacked Kossovo.

There follows," said Constantine, "a long passage, very muddled, about how gallantly the Tsar fought and how at the end it looked as if they were to win, but Vuk Brankovitch betrayed them, so they were beaten. And it goes on :

Then the Turks overwhelmed Lazar,  
And the Tsar Lazar was destroyed,  
And his army was destroyed with him,  
Of seven and seventy thousand soldiers.

All was holy, all was honourable  
And the goodness of God was fulfilled."

I said, " So that was what happened, Lazar was a member of the Peace Pledge Union." Through a long field of rye on the crest of a hill before me, a wind ran like the tremor that shuddered over my skin and through my blood. Peeling the shell from an egg, I walked away from the others, but I knew that the poem referred to something true and disagreeable in my own life. "Lazar was wrong," I said to myself, "he saved his soul and there followed five hundred years when no man on these plains, nor anywhere else in Europe for hundreds of miles in any direction, was allowed to keep his soul. He should have chosen damnation for their sake. No, what am I saying? I am putting the State above the individual, and I believe that there are certain ultimate human rights that must have precedence over all others. What I mean is rather that I do not believe in the thesis of the poem. I do not believe that any man can

procure his own salvation by refusing to save millions of people from miserable slavery. That it was a question of fighting does not matter, because in actual fact fighting is not much more disgusting, though probably slightly so, than many things people have to do in order that the race may triumph over certain assaults. To protect us from germs many people have to perform exceedingly distasteful tasks in connection with sewage, and to open to the community its full economic resources sailors and miners have to suffer great discomfort and danger. But indeed this poem shows that the pacifist attitude does not depend on the horrors of warfare, for it never mentions them. It goes straight to the heart of the matter and betrays that what the pacifist really wants is to be defeated. Prince Lazar and his troops were to take the Eucharist and they were to be destroyed by the Turks and then they would be saved. There is not a word about avoiding bloodshed. On the contrary, it is taken for granted that he fought as well as he could, and killed every Turk within reach. The important thing is not that he should be innocent, but that he should be defeated."

I realised fully why this poem had stirred me. When I had stood by the tomb in the monastery at Vrdnik in the Frushka Gora and touched Prince Lazar's mummied hand, I had been well aware that he was of a pattern familiar to me, that he was one of that company loving honour and freedom and harmony, which in our day includes Herbert Fisher and Lord Cecil and Professor Gilbert Murray. Such people I have always followed, for I know that they are right, and my reason acknowledges that by their rule and by their rule only can a growing and incorrupt happiness be established on earth. But when all times have given birth to such good men and such as myself who follow them, why has this happiness not long been accomplished? Why is there still poverty, when we are ready for handsomeness? Why is there carelessness for the future of children? Why is there oppression of women by men? Why is there harshness of race towards race? I know the answer. I had known the answer for long, but it had taken this poem to make my mind admit that I knew it.

It is revealed at all meetings addressed or attended by the lesser of those who care for the freedom and the well-being of others, which often exhale a strange sense of danger. Meetings of the opposite party, of those who desire others to be enslaved

for their benefit or to preserve iniquitous social institutions because of the profit they derive from them, offer the simple repulsiveness of greed and stupidity, but not this sense of danger. It is evoked in many ways: by the clothes worn by the women among the speakers and the audiences, which are of a sort not to be accounted for by poverty and by overwork, since they are not specially cheap and must indeed require a special effort to find, so far do they depart from the normal. They can serve no purpose save to alienate public opinion; and it is sad that they should not do all that they can to secure the respect of the community when they are trying to revise communal beliefs. It appears possible that they do not really want to succeed in that attempt; and that suspicion is often aroused by the quality of the speakers' voices and the response of their audiences. The speakers use all accents of sincerity and sweetness, and they continuously praise virtue; but they never speak as if power would be theirs to-morrow and they would use it for virtuous action. And their audiences also do not seem to regard themselves as predestined to rule; they clap as if in defiance, and laugh at their enemies behind their hands, with the shrill laughter of children. They want to be right, not to do right. They feel no obligation to be part of the main tide of life, and if that meant any degree of pollution they would prefer to divert themselves from it and form a standing pool of purity. In fact, they want to receive the Eucharist, be beaten by the Turks, and then go to Heaven.

By that they prove themselves inferior to their opponents, who do not want to separate themselves from the main channel of life, who believe quite simply that aggression and tyranny are the best methods of guaranteeing the future of man and therefore accept the responsibility of applying them. The friends of liberty have indeed no ground whatsoever for regarding themselves as in any way superior to their opponents, since they are in effect on their side in wishing defeat and not victory for their own principles. Not one of them, even the greatest, has ever been a Caesar as well as his kind self; and until there is a kind Caesar every child of woman is born in peril. I looked into my own heart and I knew that I was not innocent. Often I wonder whether I would be able to suffer for my principles if the need came, and it strikes me as a matter of the highest importance. That should not be so. I should ask myself with far

greater urgency whether I have done anything possible to carry those principles into effect, and how I can attain power to make them absolutely victorious. But those questions I put only with my mind. They do not excite my guts, which wait anxiously while I ponder my gift for martyrdom.

"If this be so," I said to myself, "if it be a law that those who are born into the world with a preference for the agreeable over the disagreeable are born also with an impulse towards defeat, then the whole world is a vast Kossovo, an abominable blood-logged plain, where people who love go out to fight people who hate, and betray their cause to their enemies, so that loving is persecuted for immense tracts of history, far longer than its little periods of victory." I began to weep, for the Left Wing people among whom I had lived all my life had in their attitude to foreign politics achieved such a betrayal. They were always right, they never imposed their rightness. "If this disposition to be at once Christ and Judas is inborn," I thought, "we might as well die, and the sooner the better, for the defeat is painful after the lovely promise." I turned my back on the plains, not to see the sodden grass, not to think of the woman stupid under her ploughshare in Prishtina, the weak-eyed loving brothers embracing feebly in the standard-bearer's máusoleum, the pale touts falsely and hungrily genuflecting about the Sultan's coffin, not to imagine the lost glory of the Christian Slavs, the glory different but equal and equally lost, of the Ottoman Turks. Even when I saw none of these things with the eye of the body or the mind I felt despair, and I began to run, to be more quickly with my companions.

The party I had left had now been joined by a fourth, an old Albanian wearing the white skull-cap which is as the fez to the Moslems of that people. He had been invited to share our food, and he was sitting on the ground with his back to me. When I drew nearer he turned about to greet me with the smiling social grace peculiar to Albanians, and I saw that in his arms there was lying a black lamb such as I had seen sacrificed at the rock of the Sheep's Field ; and the meaning of Kossovo was plain.

The black lamb and the grey falcon had worked together here. In this crime, as in nearly all historic crimes and most personal crimes, they had been accomplices. This I had learned in Yugoslavia, which writes obscure things plain, which fur-

nishes symbols for what the intellect has not yet formulated. On the Sheep's Field I had seen sacrifice in its filth and falsehood, and in its astonishing power over the imagination. There I had learned how infinitely disgusting in its practice was the belief that by shedding the blood of an animal one will be granted increase ; that by making a gift to death one will receive a gift of life. There I had recognised that this belief was a vital part of me, because it was dear to the primitive mind, since it provided an easy answer to various perplexities, and the primitive mind is the foundation on which the modern mind is built. This belief is not only hideous in itself ; it pollutes the works of love. It has laboured for annulment of the meaning of Christianity, by insinuating itself into the Church and putting forward, by loose cries and the drunkenness of ecstasy, a doctrine of the Atonement too absurd to be set down in writing. By that doctrine it is pretended that Christ came to earth to cook up a senseless and ugly magic rite, to buy with His pain an unrelated good, and it is concealed from us that His death convicted us of sin, that it proved our kind to be so cruel that when goodness itself appeared amongst us we could find nothing better to do with it than kill it. And I had felt, as I walked away from the rock with Militsa and Mehmed, that if I thought longer about the sacrifice I should learn something more, of a nature discreditable to myself.

Now that I saw the lamb thrusting out the forceless little black hammer of its muzzle from the flimsy haven of the old man's wasted arms, I could not push the realisation away from me very much longer. None of us, my kind as little as any others, could resist the temptation of accepting this sacrifice as a valid symbol. We believed in our heart of hearts that life was simply this and nothing more, a man cutting the throat of a lamb on a rock to please God and obtain happiness ; and when our intelligence told us that the man was performing a disgusting and meaningless act, our response was not to dismiss the idea as a nightmare, but to say, " Since it is wrong to be the priest and sacrifice the lamb, I will be the lamb and be sacrificed by the priest." We thereby set up a principle that doom was honourable for innocent things, and conceded that if we spoke of kindness and recommended peace it was fitting that afterwards the knife should be passed across our throats. Therefore it happened again and again that when we fought

well for a reasonable cause and were in sight of victory, we were filled with a sense that we were not acting according to the divine protocol, and turned away and sought defeat, thus betraying those who had trusted us to win them kindness and peace.

Thus it was that the Slavs were defeated by the Turks on the field of Kossovo. They knew that Christianity was better for man than Islam, because it denounced the prime human fault, cruelty, which the military mind of Mohammed had not even identified, and they knew also that their essential achievements in conduct and art would be trodden down into the mud if they were vanquished. Therefore, because of the power of the rock over their minds, they could not go forward to victory. They knew that in this matter they were virtuous, therefore it was fitting that they should die. In that belief they betrayed all the virtuous who came after them, for five hundred years. And I had sinned in the same way, I and my kind, the Liberals of Western Europe. We had regarded ourselves as far holier than our Tory opponents because we had exchanged the role of priest for the role of lamb, and therefore we forgot that we were not performing the chief moral obligation of humanity, which is to protect the works of love. We have done nothing to save our people, who have some little freedom and therefore some power to make their souls, from the trampling hate of the other peoples that are without the faculty for freedom and desire to root out the soul like a weed. It is possible that we have betrayed life and love for more than five hundred years on a field wider than Kossovo, as wide as Europe. As I perceived it I felt again that imbecile anxiety concerning my own behaviour in such a crisis, which is a matter of only the slightest importance. What mattered was that I had not served life faithfully, that I had been too anxious for a fictitious personal salvation, and imbecile enough to conceive that I might secure it by hanging round a stinking rock where a man with dirty hands shed blood for no reason.

"Is this not a lovely old Albanian man?" asked Constantine. Indeed he was; and he was the lovelier because he was smiling, and the smile of an Albanian is cool and refreshing as a bite out of a watermelon, their light eyes shine, their white teeth gleam. Also this old man's skin was white and transparent, like a very thin cloud. "I think he is very good," said Con-



stantine, "and he is certainly very pathetic, for he has guessed we are going to the Trepcha mines and he wants us to get a job for his grandson, who, he says, is a clever boy. I wonder if we could not do something about it." Constantine was always at his happiest when he was being kind, and this opportunity for benevolence made his eye shine brighter than we had seen it for many a day; but the cheek below was pouched and raddled like a weeping woman's. Perhaps he had been weeping. The grey falcon had visited him also. He had bared his throat to Gerda's knife, he had offered his loving heart to the service of hate, in order that he might be defeated and innocent.

"Naturally," said Dragutin, speaking broken German so that the old man should not understand, "this one must be something of a villain, since he is an Albanian. The Albanians, having the blood feud and being brigands and renouncers of Christ, are great villains. But this one is poor and very old, and whatever harm he does he cannot do for much longer, so let us do what we can for him." He shuddered, then laid his open hand on his chest and breathed deeply, as if he had thought of old age and was restoring himself by savouring his own health and strength. It would have been possible to take him as an image of primitive simplicity had he not, only a little time before, recited this subtle and complicated poem about the grey falcon, and had not that poem survived simply because his people were able to appreciate it. This is the Slav mystery: that the Slav who seems wholly a man of action, is aware of the interior life, of the springs of action, as only the intellectuals of other races are. It is possible that a Slav Caesar might be moved in crises by a purity of metaphysical motive hardly to be conceived elsewhere, save among priests and philosophers. Perhaps Stephen Dushan was not only influenced by thoughts of innocence and guilt, as all great statesmen are, but was governed by them almost to the exclusion of simpler and more material considerations. Perhaps he died in his prime as many die, because he wished for death; because this image of bloody sacrifice which obsesses us all had made him see shame in the triumph which seemed his destiny. He stood at his doorway in the Balkan mountains and looked on the gold and ivory and marble of Constantinople, on its crosses and its domes and the ships in its harbours, and he knew that he was as God to these things, for they would cease to be, unless he retained them as

clear thoughts in his mind. He feared to have that creative power, he stepped back from the light of his doorway, he retreated into the blameless world of the shadows; and Constantinople faded like a breath on a window-pane.

"Yugoslavia is always telling me about one death or another," I said to myself, "the death of Franz Ferdinand, the death of Alexander Obrenovitch, and Draga, the death of Prince Michael, the death of Prince Lazar, the death of Stephen Dushan. Yet this country is full of life. I feel that we Westerners should come here to learn to live. But perhaps we are ignorant about life in the West because we avoid thinking about death. One could not study geography if one concentrated on the land and turned one's attention away from the sea." Then I cried out, for I had forgotten the black lamb, and it had stretched out its neck and laid its cold twitching muzzle against my bare forearm. All the men laughed at me, though the Albanian was careful to keep a central core of courtesy in his laughter. I returned their laughter, but I was frightened. I did not trust anybody in this group, least of all myself, to cast off this infatuation with sacrifice which had caused Kossovo, which, if it were not checked, would abort all human increase.

### *Kossovska Mitrovitsa I*

The town lay on the limits of the plain, at the threshold of the warm, broken Serbian country that reminds Somerset men of Somerset and Scots of the Lowlands, a little town, a standard town, with barracks on a hill, some minarets, the main body of its houses round the bend in the river: some exquisite old Turkish houses, with their beautifully proportioned upper storeys and intricately carved lattices, notably in the street where we found our hotel. "Go in, go in," said Dragutin impatiently, "do not look at the rat warrens left by the abominable, look rather at this hotel, which has been built since the mines at Trepcha were opened, and is *fno, fno*." Certainly the large café we entered was very clean and proud and well found, and entirely lacked the Balkan touch: that is to say, nothing in the place looked as if it had been brought from somewhere else and adapted to its present purposes by a preoccupied intellectual. But the people who were sitting there were Balkan enough.

Four men were playing cards with their hats on, and a young priest was circling round them with a glass of tea in his hand, looking at their cards. He was supremely beautiful ; his long hair and beard were wavy and blue-black, his eyes were immense and gentian-blue. At the sight of one man's hand he flung back his head, cried out something mocking, sat down, and sipped his tea between gusts of silent laughter. " From his accent I think he is Russian," said Constantine ; and indeed he had the spiral and ethereal air, as of one formed from smoke-wreaths, which I had noticed in some of the Russian priests and monks I had met in Yugoslavia. " Yes, he is a Russian," said the waiter ; " there are people of all nations working in the Trepcha mines, and among them are many Russians, and this is the son of one amongst them."

" Now I have engaged our rooms," said my husband, " I must go and telephone to the people at the mines, to see if it will be convenient for them to let us go up and see them now." " Certainly, certainly," said Constantine, " I will tell the waiter to show you the telephone and get you the number." But when my husband came and told us, " It is all right, they sound very nice people, very Scotch, and they say they will be very delighted to see us, and that we are to come up at once," Constantine said with a sad smile, " I hope that you did not frighten your friends by telling them that you were bringing me with you, for I am going to excuse myself." " But why ? " exclaimed my husband. " They sounded as if they would really be so pleased to see you, it was not merely a matter of politeness. And I am sure you will be interested to visit the mine." Constantine shook his head and continued to smile. " I do not think they will really be very disappointed if I do not come with you," he said. " I understand the English too well to believe that. I think you and your friends will be happier if you are all English together and you can say what you really think of my country." He said it with Gerda's accent. " And as for seeing the mine, I am a writer and I do not really need to visit a mine to know what it is like." He added, that I might not fail to note that he had let fly at me, " I am not a journalist, me. I am a poet."

He was depriving himself horribly. If he had come with us there would have been new people to impress and charm ; and his mind, which was actually not at all autokinetic, but which,

like a New Zealand geyser, let loose its fountains only when some solid object had been dropped into it, would have been inspired to its best by the spectacle of anything so remote from his experience as a mine. But it was no use arguing. One by one he was closing the shutters of all his windows. We sat for a moment in silence drinking our coffee. A waiter came in with a plate of sweet cakes, slices of the Dobosh and Sacher Torten that in the Balkans mean sophistication and pride and contact with the West, and put it down by the card-players. The young priest took one and began to circle round the players again, eating it upwards instead of downwards, pressing it against the roof of his mouth with his tongue, as the bears in the Zoo do, when they are given a spoonful of honey. The upper half of the tall café windows nearly touched the projecting first floor of a Turkish house opposite. Two bare hands gripped the top of the lattice, we were being watched by a hidden face.

Dragutin walked through the café and Constantine called out, "Are you ready to take them to the mines in a minute or two?" He answered, "Yes, indeed. I have put my head in a basin of cold water, and I am just as fresh as if I had just left Skoplje. And if I had not I should still be ready to go to the mines, for that place up there is *fino, fino*. There would I live if I were not the Ban's chauffeur, and I say it seriously."

Before Dragutin shut the automobile door on us, he cried again, "*Fino, fino!*" and waved his arm in promise that we were going to drive to Paradise. "I wonder what it is that Dragutin considers *fino, fino*," said my husband, "I fear it may be something quite terrible in concrete." Looking out of the window, I said, "There are an extraordinary number of shops, and they sell excellent things, really quite excellent fruit." "I see that everybody moves quickly and lightly," said my husband. "This little place has a pride, as if it were somewhere like Bitolj." The road took us out of Kossovska Mitrovitsa, into a valley, hugging the base of steep hills covered with dwarf beechwoods and winding with the willow-hung course of a river, and brought us soon to a succession of prodigies alien from the idyllic character of the countryside, which suggested the more delicate type of folk-song, just a little more robust than the written lyric. There was a multiplication of railway tracks by the river-bank; and then there was a low hill, not a

mound but a hill, square-cut and the colour of death. "That is waste from the mines," said my husband; "nothing can ever be done with it, nothing will ever grow on it." Then came a group of pale corrugated buildings, fantastic according to the whimsy of engineering, straddling high on stilts here, there dropping long galleries from third floor to ground like iron necks that want to drink, or lifting little tanks that stand on thin legs among the roofs like storks. "This is an immense place," said my husband happily. Then the river regained its peace and ran among its water-meadows again, and the road forsook it and swung up the southern incline of a steep hill. "*Fino, fino!*" cried Dragutin, waving at the hillside; and he was perfectly right. The upper half of the hillside was unreclaimed from wild nature and wild history; above beech-woods and thickets, a slope of long grass harlequined with flowers ran up to a pinched peak confused with the ruins of a castle. This was lovely enough, but not so lovely as what lay below. The lower half of the hillside was entirely covered with villas of the Golder's Green sort, standing in little gardens; and it was indeed *fino, fino*. I would not have thought so before I went to the Balkans, but now I knew it.

"I never realised before," said my husband, "that a garden is a political thing." For weeks past we had never seen a country house which was not planned on the definite understanding that the people living in it were bound to be frightened most of the time, and for very good reason. Unless houses were in the centre of a town they turned blank sides to the road, and surrounded themselves with high walls, to halt the attack of the Turkish soldier, the brigand or the tax-collector. But here we saw windowed walls freely exposed to the four quarters, their irises and their roses and green peas and runner beans left unguarded before every eye. Here nobody's grandmother had been raped and hamstrung, nobody's grandfather had had his entire crop stolen by brigands and been marched off by the disappointed tax-collectors to do a season's forced labour for the Pasha and never been seen again. Some of the windows were brightly giving back the westering sun, and it seemed like a blast blown by a jolly trumpeter who had never known despair. "These houses belong to the chiefs," said Dragutin, "but the men also have beautiful homes. Look down in the valley! But let us go on, for the Gospodin Mac's

home is at the very top, and it's the most beautiful of all ! " Thus we ascended to heights superior to Golder's Green, to Chislehurst, to very Heaven, which is indeed what Chislehurst is, can one but see it for a second brushed clear of that dust which settles on institutions, not when they are disused but when they have been so long in use that they are taken for granted.

There was a gravel sweep, and beds of standard roses on each side of the front door, and Dorothy Perkins all over the white rough-cast walls, and a perambulator on the porch. An Aberdeen terrier waddled out to meet us, and we acclaimed him, since not for weeks had we heard a country dog bark so comfortably, with so palpable a mere feint of exasperation. But this dog had known no graver incident in its life than a moment's uncertainty about the verdict of the judges at Cruft's ; he did not come of a line of dogs trained to take food only from their master's hands lest his enemies should poison them. Within the villa there was English chintz, fatly upholstered armchairs and sofas, polished floors and, as so often in an English home, a Scottish family. There was the Gospodin Mac, a Scotsman of the toughly delicate type, whose sharp features and corded neck and lean body looked as if the east winds that had blown on him in his childhood had twisted and wrung every part of him save the head and the heart. His wife was a sample of the other Scotland, the abundant Scotland, the one country which knows how to make its cakes rich enough, that scorns the superficial voluptuousness of icing and cream fillings and achieves the sober luxury of shortbread and Scotch bun. She was strongly built ; Ayrshire born she used the deep soft speech of the Western Lowlands ; and she moved slowly and confidently, as those do, no doubt, who work in the Mint. For she too had behind her a store of wealth, in her mother wit and powers of observation, her invincible curiosity, and her unalterably high standards. There was a married daughter, who wrung my heart without knowing it by her resemblance to the dearest friend of my schooldays, whose angular grace and fine cheek-bones and clear colouring and sweet voice she had borrowed without the slightest excuse of a blood tie. These people instantly entranced us. I hung round them shamelessly, like a hungry dog at a larder door. We stayed with them too long that day, for we accepted when we were asked to supper, and did not go back to the hotel afterwards

as soon as we should. Indeed, whenever I found myself in their presence I stayed with them exactly as long as I could, because they knew all sorts of things that I and my friends do not know, they were all sorts of things that I and my friends are not.

"Neither this nor any of the mines we own in Yugoslavia is being worked for the first time. First the Greeks worked them, and then the Romans : then in the Middle Ages the Serbs brought in the Saxons to work them. Then under the Turks the work stopped, stopped dead, for five centuries, until we started it again. And the funny thing is that you can tell each period by its style, without looking at its age. The Greeks had great fancy, they seem to have been wonderful at guessing where the stuff was likely to be and finding the most ingenious way of getting at it. But their construction was only fairish. The Romans don't seem to have had such good ideas but they were grand on construction. They always made a lovely job of the building. And the Saxons just came along nicely, without adding anything, but following on well. And we're using a lot of it just as it was. I never go by the stone seat where the Roman sentinel sat, without giving it a pat, and wondering too. For just by that seat there's a bit of construction that none of us can understand. There's a long piece of tunnelling, too small for even a child to crawl through, running from one full-sized gallery to another, and no way of getting from one to the other that I can see. We've all puzzled our heads over it, and not one of us can work out an explanation. But sometimes that happens, you find workings in old mines that are incomprehensible to the finest engineers." It was disconcerting, this emergence of mystery, constant character of human activities, in anything so concrete as mining.

There was an offer to take us up to the mine next day, which I accepted so eagerly that the Gospodin Mac brought forward his immensely thick eyebrows and made his terms plain. "I said *up* to the mine, not *down* the mine, mind you." My husband and I smiled at one another, for I have a terror of going below the earth, which has kept me out of London and New York subways for twenty years ; but I said, "Is it so dangerous then ?" But it was not a matter of danger ; it was the men's feelings that had to be considered. "They believe that if women come down the mine there is bound to be

an accident. Now will you explain me that? They had just that same belief out in the mines where we were in South America, and they have it in mines all over the world. But elsewhere than here you have miners whose families have been working below surface for generations and who have worked in different countries. It's natural they should have developed their superstitions and then pooled them with the miners of these other countries. But the people here haven't worked in a mine for five hundred years: in fact I don't think these people have ever worked in mines, because under the Serbian Empire it was Saxons and Saxons only who were miners. The foreign miners who taught these chaps their mining work can't have given them these ideas, for they couldn't speak Serbian enough for general conversation, indeed they have to teach them largely by the look-see method. Well, how does it happen that miners here now hold, and hold passionately, as if they had held them for generations, exactly the same superstitions that miners hold all over the world? I wish somebody would explain me that." His daughter said, "And there's no use arguing with them over this superstition, for whenever Dad's insisted on letting a woman go down the mine there's been an accident just afterwards." "A serious one?" The Gospodin Mac shrugged his shoulders. We paused, confronted for a moment by the suspicion that the universe was idiotic: or that man was idiotic, made idiotic to the point of suicide, which would make his unconscious self pull down a prop and let blackness devour him, rather than that his libel on the female of his kind should be proved untrue.

The women talked too, always well, always of known things. They spoke of the people in the town. Yes, there were still some Turkish families who had not gone back to Turkey, who were indeed too wealthy to abandon their interests here. There was one family which Mrs. Mac knew quite well, who still kept a nice house outside the town. There were some fine sons, but they were all at odds, all pulled apart because they wanted to fit in with Yugoslavian life but had their family pride and tradition keeping them to Mohammedanism, which made them aliens in their own country. One had recently consented to obey his parents and marry the daughter of a merchant in Bitolj, in order to cement some business alliance. "But the boys here get used to seeing the girls that work in our offices down at the



mill," said Mrs. Mac, "and right smart they are; indeed, I think the White Russians almost overdo it." The girl from Bitolj did not satisfy these standards, and it was the habit of the young husband to get drunk every now and then and go with his wife to some public place and twitch off her veil and cry, 'Look at the dreary piece I've been given!' But he always woke up afterwards a good Turk, and suffered agonies of repentance for his outbreak, so he had the worst of both worlds.

"Most of the Moslems we have working for us are Albanians," said the Gospodin Mac, "and everybody likes the Albanians." That is universally said: the enmity the Turks fostered between the Albanians and all the other Balkan races is being allayed simply by Albanian charm. They began to talk of their old gardener, an Albanian Moslem, whom they had loved dearly, and who was now desperately ill of an internal disease. "I doubt his wife's any great help to him," said Mrs. Mac. "It's a funny thing, these Moslem women aren't so domesticated as you would think. They say they don't take any pleasure in cooking, and that if they're by themselves they just live on black coffee, drinking it all the day through. I don't think they know how to make their men comfortable. But the people round here were in a terrible state until the mine started. Lots of them had no notion of cooking. They'd bake a kind of unleavened bread in the ashes and that's all they'd do; and in the time when the gourds are in they'd mix up some gourds and dough and bake it into the most awful mash you ever saw, just like the dog's dinner. Meat they'd never see from one year to another, so they just lived on this mess."

It is written in the history books that three hundred years after Kossovo the Serbs of this district tried to find a remedy for their misery by emigration. They had never been subdued and had spent those intervening centuries in perpetual revolt, but after they had aided the Austrians in their attacks on the Ottoman Empire in the latter half of the seventeenth century and had seen the Westerners, with all their advantages fail, they lost heart. Then came the time that is written of again and again, when the Patriarch Arsenius III accepted the Austrian Emperor Leopold's offer to receive hospitably all Serbs migrating into his territory, and he marched at the head of thirty-seven thousand Serbian families across the waste lands of the Slavs into Hungary in 1690. That is what is set out in the

history books. But of course it is not the whole truth. Nothing is written of the people who did not join in the trek, for of course not all of them did. When Caulaincourt passed across Russia at the side of Napoleon they found that none of the towns which had been evacuated were quite empty. In each of them were "Quelques malheureux de la dernière classe du peuple", "quelques vieux hommes et femmes de la dernière classe". It would be so here. There would be some people who would not join in the emigration because their extreme misfortune made them unacceptable even by their own unfortunate community: the old, the sick, the criminal, women without men, victims of odd obligations, those on whom the enemy had some hold. They stayed behind, and the generations after them forgot. Forgot everything, even how to cook. So what they ate looked like the dog's dinner. History came up in its real colours, blown on by this woman's breath.

We said good-night and stood in the porch under the Dorothy Perkins roses, waiting for Dragutin. In the valley below a dog howled, and howled again: a bore of a dog that had never been told about climax. "Confound that dog," said Gospodin Mac, "that's the one that keeps me from sleeping. We must see about that to-morrow; this is the third night that it's been giving us a concert." "It's the German's dog," said his daughter. "Do you have many Germans working here?" asked my husband. "Only the one that takes care of the rope-way," said the Gospodin Mac. "Well, if you have to have a rope-way, you have to have Germans," said my husband, "I don't think I like that, the way that all the decent funiculars in the world are made by a German company." "I don't like it myself," said the Gospodin Mac, "but we console ourselves with thinking that they won't make a funicular except with English steel rope." His happy knowledge of material objects made me think of two lines of a poem taught me in my childhood, which had always till now seemed ironic:

The world is so full of a number of things,  
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

The night wind blew through the women's thin dresses, and I murmured apologetically, "That chauffeur is a very long time in coming." Then we heard through the darkness the voice of Dragutin making his farewells to the butler and the cook at the

kitchen door, slow and deep-chested and rhetorical, and he came striding along with primitive but superb panache: so might a subject of Stephen Dushan's have borne himself, sure that at any moment now he might receive the horse and armour which would make him a noble. With a new breadth of style, he drove us down the hillside, where naked lights over gateways carved out of the blackness a white cell of garden that would be for ever England as far as Carter's seeds could help it, along the dark highway, through the sleeping town, to the hotel, which was oddly at this late hour a square of light. The café was still half full of people. It had the same air as all places where Slavs sit up at night: it was as if time had precipitated itself in the artificial light and hung there suspended, brooding before it again committed itself to the curious course of life. "You are up late," my husband said to the proprietor. He answered, "It is the White Russians from the mines, they never want to go to bed." And indeed it could be seen that it was so, for these people had the Russian quality which, not the same as merit, nor even beauty, makes them a point of departure for the imagination, that special quality which makes any actor or actress with Terry or Barrymore blood light up a stage, whether he or she can act or not. "I do not complain," said the proprietor, "it means money. We had no money till the mines opened, but now it comes in, more and more every day. God be thanked!" he said.

We were in a town drenched with a rising tide, but the tide had not yet risen so far as one might suppose. That we learned next morning as we went about making purchases before they came to take us up to the mines. This was an island: parts of it were even now *incomunicado*, not having had whispered to them the words we all know. We realised this when a photographer from whom we had bought some films halted us at the show-case outside his shop, saying, "Look! Of these I am unusually proud!" He spoke of several pictures representing a middle-aged woman, wearing the full trousers and embroidered jacket of an odalisque, and offering the spectator a cup of coffee with a leer which indicated that it was a symbol for the joys of the harem. The portraits were in fact not unattractive. It is true that she was plump as an elephant, but she was so beautiful that the resemblance only served to explain what it is that male elephants feel about female elephants.

"Very nice," said my husband, "who is she?" "The wife of the general in command of our garrison," said the photographer. It was as if a show-case in Aldershot High Street should be filled with portraits of the wife of the general in command of the district, clad in the coquetry and localised plumage of Mistinguett.

But we spoke no more of her, for my husband had caught sight of another photograph, set just below these portraits, which were so exuberant in the literal sense of the word. It strangely contrasted with them. Four astonished mourners presented to the street a lidless coffin, in which there lay a bearded man with closed eyes, death collecting visibly in the hollows of his cheeks. About the coffin stood some children, wild-eyed with grief, and a woman putting her hand to a forehead blank with distraction. "My God, who was that?" my husband asked. "It is our late mayor," said the photographer. "He was a very good man." "Was he assassinated, or was it an accident?" asked my husband. "Who? The Mayor?" said the photographer. "No, no, it was remarkable how everybody liked him. He died of something wrong with his stomach." "Then what is this scene?" "It is just his funeral." "But look!" I said, pulling at my husband's sleeve, for I had found yet a third indication of a life different from ours. It was the photograph of a young black-haired man wearing the kind of face which Slavs assume when they intend to look romantic, which all Russian ballet-dancers use when they are teetering for balance: it resembles a sad spoon. The portrait showed his nude torso to the waist: and between his mammary glands, which were a shocking waste, a chain suspended that most innocent exemplar of jewellery, a heart-shaped pendant with a seed pearl in its centre. "Who is this young man?" asked my husband. "He is a lieutenant in the garrison here," replied the photographer, wholly without embarrassment. "He is a funny fellow, always coming to be photographed, always in fancy dress, sometimes in woman's clothes." "Are there many such young men here?" asked my husband. "He is the only one," said the photographer.

At our hotel a car waited to take us up to the mines and Constantine sat dunking a roll in his coffee. "Good morning!" we called, and he answered us civilly, but with a look of condemnation checked only by the painful exercise of courtesy. It was apparent that we were committing the same crime as those

who are not sea-sick when others are. "Will you be ready soon?" we asked. His forehead contracted in agony. It was apparent that we spoke too loud. "Ready for what?" he asked. "To go up to the mines," I said, "it will all be very interesting, and you'll like the manager, he is a most wonderful person." Constantine laughed silently into the distance. It was apparent that we had shown gross insensitiveness. "No, I do not think I would like the manager," he said. "I have read of such people in Dickens, and I think we are of quite different sorts." "Oh! come on!" we pleaded, but he raised his eyebrows and pulled his mouth down and looked down at the table-cloth, slowly shaking his head. "No," he said, "where men claw at the sides of the noble mountains, for the sake of money, mere money, there I would be quite out of place. But you go," he said kindly, "you go. I shall not blame you. We cannot all feel the same repugnances. Go up there and be happy. And I will get Dragutin to drive me to some place where the mountains have not been violated. And there I will be at peace, and I will remember that I am a poet, and I will be very happy. Happier than I think you could understand." We murmured and left him, not because we were angered by him, for we were not. Both of us loved him, and he was at this moment most piteous, for his floridity was purplish and the whites of his eyes were dun. But it was as physically exhausting to talk to him when he was fixed in this perverse attitude as it would be to talk to a contortionist whose mouth spoke out of the shadow under his crooked knee.

The chauffeur who had come to take us to the mines was the personal chauffeur of the Gospodin Mac; and it appeared that there are some who are heroes to their valets. "Does he hope we will repeat all this to his employer?" my husband wondered; but answered himself, "No, he is too noble a creature and anyway he conceives his relationship with the Gospodin Mac as already ideal." We went out of the town and received proof that we were indeed in the South, where the land burns in summertime like the human skin; a bridge joined brown land to brown land, and in a brown river there swam brown youths. In a valley where still browner babies kicked and squealed among bulrushes in a shallow stream, there marched over the mountainside the pylons of a rope-way, with here and there a carrier riding down from the mines to the mill.

Thereafter there was a group of gay new houses up on the hills, and the chauffeur halted us. "Our workmen live there," he said, and we responded that they were very beautiful; and so they were, they had the same lyrical quality as some modern French industrial garden cities, such as those on the Seine near Caudebec where the hydroplanes are made. "Some of the houses you will see later on are built by the company, and they are magnificent," continued the chauffeur, "but these are built by the workmen themselves, and they are fine enough. They also have the wonderful thing that the Gospodin Mac has brought to our country. They also have the septic tank." He turned towards us passionately. "Is it not a most wonderful thing, the septic tank? All this filth that gushes out" — his arms drew on the sky an image of the impurity that floods the universe, not to be beaten back by the spirit, only to be conquered by the talisman of the Gospodin Mac — "turned into water, clear water!" His hands fluttered, saluting salvation. "Many centuries after my master is dead," he cried, "he will be honoured because he brought us the septic tank." The primal idea of sanitation surprised us by its angelic appearance. Yet the memory of the obscure apartment at Prishtina, with the age-old coat of slime on its floor, made it not so surprising.

I would never have known the mine-head for what it was. It looked like a railway station, standing under a scar in the wooded hills at the valley-head, with a goods tram loaded with lumps of ore, the colour of ageing and desperate silver, puffing away from it. In what looked like a waiting-room, and was a kind of office, we found two young Englishmen wearing overalls and carrying electric torches, who paused to tell us before they went off to take baths that they had just been down the mine with the Gospodin Mac, and that he had come up first and would be with us as soon as he had bathed and dressed. They were admirable young men, neatly shaped by their profession, like well-sharpened pencils. Not theirs the long points of the artists and scientists, which are as like as not to break and necessitate a fresh use of the knife; not theirs the bluntness of those who know no craft. They were just right. As they went I looked at the map of the mine that was hanging on the wall and said, "I cannot understand the name of this place — Stan Trg. Trg I know to be market, but what is Stan? It does not seem like a Serbian word at all." "Neither it is," said one of the English-

men, "it is simply a mistake. Somebody copied the name wrongly when the mine was started, and nobody about the place knew enough Serbian to correct it. But it ought to be Stari." They left us marvelling at the impersonality of the governing daemon of mining, which goes into a country of which it knows nothing, not so much of its language as the word which means "old", and digs down into its vitals for its secret wealth.

By daylight the Gospodin Mac's wind-bitten fragility looked even frailer than on the night before, his strength more apostolic in its meek sternness. We walked out of the office with him and the drivers of some passing ox-carts turned their heads to look at us, strangers partaking in the local glory. Each of them was enough to ravish the heart of woman, for they wore the Lika cap. This is the most attractive form of head-gear ever designed for men. It is a round black cap with a red edge to it, and a bunch of fine black braid falling to the left shoulder where it gives any man an air of gallantry and amusing faithlessness. By itself it would explain why Lord Byron loved the Near East. "But Lika is far away," I said. It is on the Karst, on the limestone behind the Dalmatian coast, to be reached from Kossovo only through Montenegro or by by-ways in the Bosnian hills. "We are full of those chaps," said Gospodin Mac, "the Government sends batches of them down here to work for us, from the villages up there on the mountains, where they can never make a decent living, because there's literally no land, just pocketfuls of earth in the rock. We have all sorts of people here, you know. It's a fine mix-up of races and religions. We have the Catholic Croats from Croatia, Catholic Croats from Dalmatia, the local Orthodox Serbs who were here when we came, the Orthodox Serbs from Serbia who are quite different, some Orthodox Serbs from Montenegro, who are quite different again, the local Albanians who are some of them Moslems and some of them Catholic and a few of them Orthodox, some White Russians in the offices and in the mill, and us Scotch, and English and Americans. Yes, they get on well now. At first it wasn't good. Sometimes it was very bad indeed. We had a Croat foreman who engaged the hands, and there was a devil of a row about him with the Serbs, they swore he was favouring the Croats. But he was a good man, and I thought there was nothing in it, and I wouldn't fire him. So one day the poor fellow was

sitting in his office and a Serb workman who had had too much to drink came in and shot him dead. It was a terrible business. But we caught the murderer, though he had gone up into the hills, and he was sent down for a long sentence, and that got us all on a stage further. They saw that the old days were over, and that you didn't pay for a life with a life, but with a life in a prison. That they don't like so much, and they began to see things differently." "Had the Croat foreman been favouring the Croats?" I asked, and when he did not answer but talked of something else, I asked him again at his first pause: I never learned better when I was a child, though they often tried to teach me. "We have a Croat now in much the same position, and no man could be fairer," was his answer, and I fell behind, staring in the dust while the two men talked mineral technicalities. "I *thought* there was nothing in it. . . . We have a Croat now who . . ." I saw him sitting alone in an office, turning over a dead man's papers, growing suddenly white and pinched round the nostrils as he recognised some obstacle to order which had taken the mean advantage of being ideological and not metallurgical, of not being amenable to treatment on sound mining principles.

A winding road took us up a steep hill through a garden city of white houses and pink roofs, set about with orchards. It was exactly like such places in the West and totally different. With us they mean an attempt to mitigate a victory of darkness over decent earth; but here it meant that the decent earth had for the first time in centuries known other than darkness. With us industrial workers appear as victims of a social system that has prevented them from enjoying the relatively agreeable existence of a free peasant or an artisan, and has condemned them to a standard of comfort far below that enjoyed by other classes who do easier work or none at all. That view was moonshine here. For five centuries no way of living had been within reach of these people which could be considered as a preferable alternative; this was not so in Macedonia and not so in Serbia, but it was true of this particular area. For five centuries there had been no class in this community which enjoyed such a high standard of comfort, and there still is none; the functionaries and Army officers are far more pinched for means. In the porches of these little houses women were sitting as the blessed in Paradise, with the reinforced satis-



faction of those who have known a previous inferiority. Their children, playing among the flowers, turned on us eyes that, whether black or that profound yet light Slav blue, seemed to lack something and be the better for it; and we realised how many of the children we had seen lately had been solemnised by the knowledge of hunger and peril. "Running water in every house," murmured the Gospodin Mac, "and they keep them like new pins." We passed through this ordinary yet authentic Eden, and came to a canteen where the unmarried workers eat their midday meal. There cooks stood smiling with the special pride of those who practise mysteries not only beneficent but novel, beside cauldrons where bean soup bubbled brown and sooty black, and lamb chops simmered in gravy peat-red with paprika. I know of at least one English public school where the food is not so good. There was no mistake about it, here mechanical civilisation was enticing. This modern industrial unit pleased like a paper transparency held against light, for the double reason that it was a superb specimen of its kind, and that there was behind it the vacuum of Turkish misrule.

It was as touching as the glow of contentment in the eyes of the foreign immigrants in the United States during the good old days before 1929, who were entranced to find themselves where there was an abundance of food, no matter what the weather might be, warm and cheap clothing, comfortable footwear, water-tight housing, and, not easily to be acquired but within the possibility of acquirement as never in East Galicia or Portugal, radios, refrigerators and automobiles. They had not realised that in this new industrialised world there are seasons other than those determined by the course of the sun, which are both crueller and longer; and that the urban versions of blizzard and drought are more terrible because they must be suffered in an absolute destitution, unknown to communities where each owns or has the right of access to at least a strip of land, and where all are joined by ties of blood or friendship cultivated through generations. The process had been slower in our own country, but I had seen its last lamentable phase. The English manufacturers of the nineteenth century had appeared as redeemers to the down-trodden agricultural labourers who were dying rather than living under a land system which would have shocked the Balkans,

and who found food and warmth such as they had never known in the towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire and the Midlands; but they have no such reputations among the vast unhappy army of the unemployed. My instinct therefore was to warn the miners who were coming in at the door, grinning with happy appetite, "Do not be deceived. Whom you suppose to be your benefactor is in fact your enemy, and will enslave you and take from your children what you never lost even under the Turk, the right to work."

They would have answered, "What, we are to count as an enemy one who gave us food for our bellies and clothes for our back, and a reasonable chance of dying in our beds? If you ask that, then you can never have known hunger and cold and fear." And they would have been right. It is a monstrous piece of bogus liberalism to deny that industrialism has done much for the highest interests of humanity by raising the standard of living. It is as foolish as to deny the harm it has done them by not raising it enough, by poisoning the skies and fields with cheap cities, and taking away the will of its employees by keeping them in political and economic subjection. I was at fault in assuming that because English and American industry had proved unable to maintain its workers as it had at first promised, that must be so in Yugoslavia. The slow decline of prosperity in England was due to the shrinkage of markets, caused largely by the increasing capacity of the Orient to produce its own requirements, to the defects of the upper-class education which put all industrial undertakings with the promise of stability into the hands of heirs incapable of adapting themselves to altered conditions, and to over-conservative banking. The quick decline of prosperity in America was due to industrialists who had lost sight of the existing limitations of consumption, and to reckless banking. In both England and America the ultimate blame lay, of course, deeper than this: in the insistence of the richer classes in keeping too large a proportion of the profits of industry, and all its control, in their own hands. This meant that it was exploited for the benefit of their immediate needs and not with regard to its perpetuation. That deepest factor of all was present in the Yugoslavian situation. These miners were working for the share-holders, whose interests came first. But the mine had been started after the war, when European aspirations had become more modest,

by Anglo-American financiers of the more stable sort, who had never suffered from the gambling fever that swept Wall Street and the Middle West. It was probably under cautious and disillusioned management, and was certainly staffed by men who had no hopes of rising to permanent grandeur in a Scotch baronial mansion with twenty-five bedrooms, all kept up by grinding the faces of the poor. It might well be that the industrial unit would last so long as there was metal to be fetched out of the ground, prudently and patiently.

Was there, one wondered, unity among these workers? Were the English and Americans, who formed the high command of the mines, as it were, sensible of the necessity to make this enterprise an instrument of life instead of death? That depended on what mining engineers were like, which was a matter wholly veiled from me. I knew that the one beside me was fully aware of the issues within his control.

The Gospodin Mac was pointing to a hillside that showed the particular charm of Serbian scenery, the upland lawn among woodlands, proper place for nymphs to dance, and he was saying, "That's our land too. And I was sorry to buy it, though it's as well for us to have as much land as we can round here. There was a piece down on the other side of the valley that we couldn't snap up in time, and some blackguards started a red-light district there that's the source of almost all the trouble we have with the men. But this land up here I was sorry to buy, because the Albanian who owned it hadn't wanted to move out of it, and he was a real decent old man. He came to me and he said, 'Here, you'd better have my land. It's no use to me any more. My women can't walk about unveiled on the place, and we can't live the same sort of life we used to before you came. So give me some money for it and we'll go down and live in the town.' And mind you, I think the family had been there for ever. We gave him two thousand pounds for the place and every step of the transaction was a pleasure, he was so honest and polite, and he knew perfectly well we were being fair with him, and he would have cut off his hand rather than not be fair with us. I often grieve that we should have put an end to the way he and his family were living, for it was producing fine people. Every now and again he comes in for advice, because he trusts us, but I don't know that there's much of his two thousand left. It's not easy to find investments in this

country that give as good return as land, and it's not easy to live a life in a little town that's as good as life in your own place up in the hills. There's no sense trying to fool oneself, not every change is for the better." That is the sort of ancient wisdom modern man must have.

He added, " But anyway I've a soft spot for the Albanians. We all like them. And it's not just because they knuckle down to us. They've got plenty of spirit. They're good trade unionists. When we had a wages' dispute some time ago the Albanians stood firmer than anybody, and I admired them for it. Afterwards the Government sent a commission down to enquire into the causes of the strike, and they hinted to me they thought it a pity we employed so many Albanians, but I wasn't having any. I said straight out we employed them because we found them decent, hard-working fellows, and we'd go on employing them. But that's something that's getting better. The Serb administrators all get to like the Albanians and less and less make a distinction between them and their own people. This country's getting over its past nicely." We paused to take breath on a steep turn in the road, and looked down on the workmen's canteen. My husband asked me, " Do you see the two men who just went into the building ? No ? Well, I thought one of them was Dragutin." " It could not have been," I said confidently, " he is taking Constantine somewhere up into the mountains." At the thought of Constantine both of us felt guilty, as if we had failed in charity by being happy away from him, with this whole and untroubled man.

But this man was a genius : the unique exception that not only fails to prove the rule, but leaves it in doubt what the rule may be. Nor could one judge anything from Gospodin Mac's predecessor, Mr. Cunningham, whom we found higher up in the road, a broad grizzled Scotsman standing in his garden with a monk, both intent on a beehive. It seemed that bee-keeping was his hobby, and he spent much of his time teaching people of the district to make and use modern hives instead of the primitive sort which have to be broken every time a comb is removed ; and this was of special interest to the poorer monasteries, which could not afford to buy sugar. When the monk had left us we walked among Mr. Cunningham's flowers, which were magically not desiccated by the South, which grew as if the earth were cooled by the Highland air that had

nourished his accent. I said to him, "What columbines! They look like living things that might fly away at any minute," and he answered, "Ay, you know they call them the fairy flowers." His Scottish r's roared past me like the March wind in Princes Street. "Fehrrry flowerrrs. . . ." Presently Mr. Cunningham said, "I'll be telling Sasha to send a bottle of absinthe up to the mess for our cocktails, if the company is as partial to it as I am," and he called to the house, "Sasha! Sasha!" He explained to us, "Sasha's our factotum here; he's a great character. Lord knows what would happen to us all if Sasha wasn't here to look after us." When Sasha came out into the garden this conversation followed the pattern so often to be remarked in countries where people of a mechanised Western race live among people of a more primitive race whom they have dominated. The Scotsman opened the conversation in the peremptory tones of a nurse speaking to a child, and the Serb answered like a child who accepts the authority of a nurse, but made a further remark in which he in his turn spoke like the nurse, and was answered by the Scotsman as if he were the child. It is thus that an English officer in India talks with his Hindu batman, it is thus that a Southerner talks with his coloured butler, it is thus that a Canadian holiday-maker talks with his Indian guide, should they be intelligent people. Only stupidity fails to recognise that each of the parties in such a relationship has command of a store of information almost wholly forbidden to the other; so that each, in the other's sphere, is helpless and astray unless his host is generous. That recognition was fully present in the Scotsman's voice. His climate-toughened shrewdness made him sensitive to the problems of his profession, the nature of ore and its hiding-places under the earth. It made him wise also about bees, flowers and men, and not to be deflected from his wisdom by vanity. He could not have borne to sacrifice his just perception of Sasha in order to exaggerate his sense of superiority to Sasha. Such men favour the growth of civilisation.

But the ordinary run of mining engineers might not be of the same breed as their leaders. There was this inveterate disposition to care only for their hard inorganic quarry, and to leave the state of living men which was the mine's matrix unnoticed and uncomprehended, which had been responsible for the naming of a Serbian mine with the gibberish of "Stan

Trg," which had been a characteristic of those who had worked here before them, in the days anterior to the Turkish night. On a plateau by this hillside road stood the ruins of a chapel where the Saxon miners, brought here by the medieval Serbian kings, had worshipped according to their faith. Those Saxons were not Serbs, nor Saxons either, but simply miners. They formed a state within the State. The Serbian laws did not bind them; they were subject to the code, which was not borrowed from Saxony, but was simply and purely of the mines. It was not, as might have been suspected, a permit to laxity, extorted by those who rendered essential services to an expanding state; it was a juristic provision for the miner's mystery, to use that admirable English word meaning all information relating to the theory and practice of a craft, which we borrowed from the Old French *mestier*, and by carelessness amounting to genius confused in spelling with the word we derive from the Greek for occult. It made that craft an iron-bound dedication: a man found damaging a mine was hung by a rope downwards in the pitshaft, and the rope was cut. For their Catholic worship these separate people had taken a church such as was built by the natives of this soil, a Byzantine church planned for the Orthodox rite, and had brought a German artist to paint it with frescoes. Centuries after, now that its vaults were broken and its frescoes washed pale by rain and sun, it was apparent that something had happened which had left this not a true growth of the genius of the land. These were true internationalists, disregarding the nation's peculiar soul.

So, too, were the young men we met in the mess at the top of the road. They were mining engineers, without any doubt. Other things they might be, sons and lovers, husbands and fathers, saints and sinners, philosophers and natural men; but each of them, picked up between Divine finger and thumb, and asked by the thunder who he was, would have answered, "I am a mining engineer." Their preoccupation with their calling was so great that it excluded any dangerously excessive intensification of itself. A mining engineer must keep fit; he must not be irritable and he must be able to bear up under physical strain. Therefore they played tennis, they read a bit, they took photographs, they learned languages; and they faced life with smooth brows and not a paunch among them.

And they presented, as a shining tiled wall, this detachment from the life around them.

There was one Serbian among them, a doctor, a jolly soul with reddish hair and a face that had begun to wrinkle not because he was older than his age but because he still loved to laugh like a child. When we said we had been in Bitolj he told me he was a native of that city, and we talked for a little about the place, its mosques, its lovely girls, its acacias, and the rich civilisation that lay under its surface. It was his belief that the town, though so much poorer than it was when it was the capital of Macedonia, was still enormously rich. "Many, many of the women that shuffle about the little shops by the river in the morning, in their cotton wrappers," he said, "have more gold round their necks and their wrists than five hundred Viennese ladies who wear silk dresses ever see in their lives. I tell you the city is full of gold, is stuffed and crammed with gold." He spoke, too, with Balkan gusto of a perilous childhood. "My father was a schoolmaster," he said, "he was the head teacher of the first Serbian school that was ever in Bitolj. The Bulgarians had their schools and the Greeks had their schools, but we Serbs had none. So my father, who was a Serb from the Shumadiya, came down and taught his own people. So my mother was always very nervous, for of course any day he might have been killed, whether by the Turks or the Bulgars or the Greeks, she did not know." "But why should he be killed because he was a schoolmaster?" asked some of the engineers. "And why was Bitolj such a rich city?" They knew nothing of the tradition of the Turkey in Europe which had shaped the land in which they lived.

They were ignorant too of something which was more recent, and had been commemorated in print, for even the English to read. I said to the doctor, "And what happened to you during the war?" and he answered, clapping his hand over his laughing mouth, "You will never guess! Do you know, I went with the retreating Serbian Army through the Albanian mountains down to the sea. You see, I should have gone with my mother and my brother and sisters in the refugee train to Salonica, but I was sent with a message to an old grand-uncle of mine in another part of the town, and on the way home I began to worry about a little boy I liked very much, so I went to see what he was going to do, and by the

time I realised I could not find him I was too late to catch the train. So I joined some soldiers whom I saw walking in the street, and I went off with them to Ochrid, and away into the Albanian mountains. And, do you know, it was not so terrible. Yes, all you have heard is true. There was snow and ice, and very little to eat, and the Albanians sniped at us from the rocks. But I felt very grown-up, and all Serb boys want to be grown-up and to fight, and the soldiers made a great pet of me. When we got up into the mountains, they took a coat off a dead soldier and put it on me, and of course it was far too big for me, it came right down to my feet, so they called me 'General Longcoat'. They were really very kind to me; when there was any food I always got the first of it. So, when we got to Corfu and they found my family was at Salonica, and sent me off to find them, I really was not so pleased. Think of being told to go to bed when you had been through all that!"

It was as astonishing as if one day a fellow-guest announced that he had been to Moscow and back with Napoleon; but it was not less astonishing that most of the Englishmen who were listening had never heard of the retreat through Albania, and not one of them had ever heard the folk-song which commemorates that agony: "Tamo Daleko, Daleko'od mora. Tamo ye selo, Tamo ye Serbiya". Yonder, far yonder, far from the sea, is my village, my Serbia! It meant that they could not know Yugoslavia; or rather that they could not synthesise all the valuable information they held regarding her into any valid picture of her. It seemed to follow from this that they were a danger to the State, because they would not be controlled by regard for her interests of which they were ignorant. Such would have been the opinion of Brigham Young, who was one of the few really great statesmen of the nineteenth century. He always regarded as enemies of the State the prospectors and miners who came to Utah in search of her mineral wealth. They were not part of his people, and therefore would not serve its interests. That was his theory; but in this mess-room above the mines of Stan Trg it emerged that there was nothing in it so far as this part of the world was concerned.

These men were not free to turn against their fellows. A force bound them. They fell to recounting tales of their beginnings; all, it seemed, had gone into strange lands as



youths, it might almost be said as children, and had been assailed by climates that were torturing misconducts of the sun and snows, and events that were monstrous births that should have been kept in bottles in the Surgeons' Hall of circumstance. They had, however, not been perturbed. They had been, and were still, sustained by a code. They believed . . . what did they believe? That one must be clean in body; that one must not tell lies, or suffer lies to be told to one: that one must do whatever work one was paid for doing, and do it well; and that one must not cause pain in other people, and must let them make their own souls as far as possible. This is the ethical tradition built into the English and American mind by Protestantism, and it is easy to deride it. There is indeed positive need that it should be derided, since it is an insufficient prop, and worse, for people who are prosperous; it is to them actually a prescription for ruin. Any Englishman of the upper bourgeoisie and the classes above it finds no difficulty about being clean; he can persuade himself that what he says is true, and can compel his economic inferiors to tell him the truth; he has probably chosen work that makes no great demands on his powers; and the duty to leave others in peace may be construed as permission to indulge in the pleasures of indifference. But this same code, applied by such as these mining engineers, was a discipline that can even become an instruction in mysticism. To be clean in lands where nature intends one to be sweaty and unkempt: to tell the truth and exact it in circumstances so difficult that cautiousness cries out to let all be glossed over; to do work well, far away from criticism, and in fatigue of the flesh and spirit; to respect the rights of alien people, who are uncomprehended and therefore terrible: this rule makes no man an enemy of the State. There are, of course, mining engineers who follow this discipline imperfectly or not at all. But since these in this mess were chosen by the Gospodin Mac, who was himself that discipline made visible, they were not of that sort. Though the West has again and again infected the Balkans with corruption, it seemed probable that this contact was innocent.

In the afternoon we drove away from the mines, down the valley to the town and the pale sprawling buildings where the ore was milled; about us conveyor belts went on their endless journeys to nowhere and puffs of smoke at escape-valves

registered the culmination of a process which, so far as I, with my mechanical incompetence, was concerned, had never begun.

"It is no use whatsoever for you to explain these things to me," I told the Gospodin Mac; "to me it is all magic and nothing but magic." "It is funny you should say that just here," he answered, "for that's exactly what these particular machines are to me, and to everybody else in the outfit." We were standing among a number of tanks, all filled with a seething solution of ore, but each bubbling in a different tempo and stained to a different shade of grey. "These machines are the most valuable we have," he continued. "They're the last word. They're wizards. In each bath the ore throws off one of its constituents, either silver or magnesium or sulphur or whatever, so that by the time it's got through this room all the goodness has been taken out of it and we've just to collect the various minerals from the baths. But I can't understand the theory on which these machines work, nor does anybody else here that I know of. I don't mean that we can't mend them when they break down. We can, just as you could correct the faults of grammar in a book of mining, though you wouldn't be able to make the sense of the book. But the principle of the things is far beyond me. The chaps who brought them over from America understood them all right, and they stayed here for a bit. But the machines were their life-work, they'd specialised on those lines, and we're general-purposes fellows who have to get on with the business of running the mine." "Do you mean that in mining also there is too much to be known?" I asked. "Much too much," he said, "for any one man." There is no escape from mystery. It is the character of our being.

But this man was not perturbed. We stood on the bridge that crossed the railway line, running from the mill to the high-road. On our left the rope-way, striding across the hills up to the high mines; on our right was the steep wooded peak, crowned with the fortress. The afternoon was golden on these heights, but the Gospodin Mac looked before him at the square-cut hill of waste which in the sunshine was the colour of something deader than death, of death without the hope of wholesome putrefaction and dissolution. "That worries me a lot," he murmured. "So far as we can see, nothing will ever grow on that, not to the end of time. Well, it's an eye-sore.

And this was a bonny place before we started on it." On the line below us a dozen men were digging a pit, Albanian Moslems in their white fezes and linen tight-waisted shirts and trousers. I levelled my camera on them, and one looked up and saw me. Instantly he was transformed, and so, the instant after, was the whole group. Gallantry ran through their bodies, turning their heads to a provocative angle, setting their hands on their hips ; their eyes and teeth flashed through the distance. Perhaps they could not see that I was no longer young, or perhaps their romanticism forbade them to notice it, so that they could go through the day with the idea that they had attracted the admiration of a beautiful Englishwoman.

The Gospodin Mac brooded over them as over his children. "I tell you they're fine, these Albanians," he said. "And I think this lot have got over the blood-feud. That's the curse of Albanian life. But they say they're dropping it. It stands to reason they will. Give a man a decent job and a house and a garden he likes, and he'll think twice about trapesing off to kill the uncle of a man who killed his second cousin, particularly if he knows he'll go to jail. That blood-feud, you know, it made everything impossible. When the Yugoslavs took over this country after the war, it was hard to get the roads safe for travelling. Under the Turks, people simply did not travel, unless they were rich enough to have an armed escort or unless they had to for some reason. There were whole villages up in the hills where every single family was in the brigandage business. You couldn't blame them. They'd been pushed into it. Maybe they'd fallen foul of the authorities at some time and got driven on to the land that can't be cultivated. Or maybe there'd been a strong character born who'd turned the whole lot of them wrong. Anyway they used to sweep down on the roads round here and rob and murder. It had to be stopped. And the only way the gendarmes could stop it was by going up into these villages and killing every man, woman and child. Mind you, nothing less would do. If they'd let one child get away, as soon as it had grown up it would have had to carry on the blood-feud against the gendarmes, or the people who were supposed to be responsible for the gendarmes' attack. And that was a cruel hard thing, not only on the villagers but on the gendarmes, who are usually very decent fellows ; and it was hard on the whole people. It

lowered their standards. If you made the gendarmes as tough as that they were as tough with everybody. But settling down, it was just a phase. . . ."

So it went on, this living exposition of the trials of a state engaged in resurrection, and therefore ravaged by the pangs of both death and birth.

When we went back to the hotel we were still glowing with satisfied listening, and we hushed each other as we caught sight of Constantine, sitting florid and miserable in the café, alone among the White Russians, a newspaper spread out on the table before him. "May we sit down with you and have coffee?" I said timidly. "Certainly, certainly," he replied, but once we were seated, imposed on us hurt and smiling silence. My husband cleared his throat and asked, "Did you have a good day in the mountains?" "I did not go. I did not care to go." Constantine answered shortly, and the silence fell again. At last he asked, "And you, I suppose you have had a charming day with your friends in the mines?" With an air of guilt, we admitted that we had. "I am very glad," he said, "I am exceedingly glad, for maybe it will not always be so happy for you and your countrymen up at the mines." He tapped on the newspaper that lay before him. "It is all written here." "What is it?" asked my husband. "An attack on the British company's title to the mine?" Constantine grimly nodded his head. "Yes. The concession was given as a reward to one of our great statesmen, and his son sold it. But he was perhaps not very clever; and all the world knows that to do business with the English one must be very clever indeed, perhaps more than clever." He raised his eyebrows and shrugged. "So perhaps a wrong was done, and perhaps it will be righted." "But the deal cannot have been crooked," said my husband. "I know the chairman of the company and what is more important I know his reputation in England and America, and the reputation of the company and its associates, and that's not how they behave. Besides it would have meant taking an immense risk. The company put a million pounds of their money into the mine before they got a penny out. If they did that on a property out of which they might be kicked at any moment because they had stolen it, they wouldn't come out of it so well."

Constantine shrugged again. "You are a city man," he

said, "a man of the city of London. No doubt all your countrymen do look well to you. But we are a simpler people. We see things from a different angle, and perhaps on what we see we shall some day act." A silence fell. We sadly drank our coffee and would have risen to go had not a young man, dressed rather in the style of a French romantic poet in the nineteenth century, paused before our table. "Good evening, Monsieur Constantine," he said in French, giving us a side-way look, "Monsieur Constantine, who was a poet, who is a Government servant." We saw that here also there were young intellectuals, as there had been in Belgrade and in Sarajevo and in Zagreb, who could not forgive Constantine for having left the opposition, who said of him quite unfairly, "Just for a handful of silver he left us, just for a ribbon to stick in his coat." "Good evening," said Constantine, and he explained to us, "This is a young writer who works by day in the laboratories at the mine. I know him well. All people are my friends everywhere." The young man continued, "Why are you sitting with that abominable rag in front of you? You know that it is full of the most abominable lies. These people at the mines are part of the filthy capitalist system, but they are as good as they can be in that condition. And it is all nonsense, it is galimatias, it is Quatsch, about the title to the mine. You know all that quite well, and you know that these papers are financed by German money, simply so that the Nazis can get their claws into our country. But you and your accursed pack of gangsters in Belgrade, you let the blackguards bring out these lying papers and threaten one of the few decent institutions in our unhappy country." "We do not," cried Constantine, "we suppress them as soon as we find out they are being published! Again and again the miserable things appear, and always we send out our forces after them and we destroy them, we stamp them into the dirt as they deserve!" He looked miserably round at us, realising as he spoke that he had contradicted himself; and he was now so disintegrated that he could not take any of the obvious ways out of the situation, he could not laugh at himself or pretend, as his talent for sleight of mind would have enabled him to do better than most men, that there was some subtle consistency behind his apparent inconsistency. There was nothing for us to do but rise and say good-night.

*Kossovska Mitrovitsa II*

We stayed another day in the town, but we never got Constantine near the Gospodin Mac, whom he would have been bound to like and to love, both because of his connoisseurship of greatness, and because of their common love for Yugoslavia. So that afternoon, while the Gospodin Mac and my husband indulged in some last orgies of technicalities in the mill, I sat alone with Mrs. Mac on the terraces of her garden, overlooking the hills and the valley where the river ran, reflecting willows, between the sweet green pastures. I was a child who had been left alone with a honey-pot, for this woman, like so many Scotswomen, had all the essential gifts of the novelist. She had been long an exile, and was homesick : half her talk made a palimpsest of the scene before us, overlaying old Serbia with Ayrshire, coloured as it lives. Touch by touch she built up a picture, harsh and honest like the portraits Degas painted in his youth, of the terrific ceremony that was performed every time her mother, a widow in the Scotland of forty years ago, arrayed herself in her weeds to leave her house : I saw and smelt again the thick black blistered crepe, and felt the cutting edge of the starched white collar, and was awed and perplexed by the drugged and thickened expression, characteristic of widows in those days, which suggested that their state had about it some joyless and degrading satisfaction. Soberly but with the feeling she described flowing as fresh through her words as when it had first gushed from her eyes and heart, she told how the character of her youth had been changed, to something precious but less gay than youth should be, by her long engagement to Gospodin Mac, who was then seeking his fortune abroad, and who had been too unsure of himself to make their betrothal more than a matter of murmured vows. All her spring days had been clouded by heart-ache ; " It's not good, running for the post, year after year." Often she had felt that people thought her dull and a failure, and she had longed to tell her secret ; but that would have been to tempt the gods by speaking of what she desired to happen as if it were already happening. Her story had the depth and vigour of early Scots poetry, of William Dunbar and Douglas' Aeneid.

This woman, with her masterly power of observation, with

her inflexible standards, had been married nearly thirty years to the Gospodin Mac, and marriage is not so much a mystery as a microscope ; but he had survived all her scrutiny, he had passed all her tests. Now he was the test she applied to life. She spoke constantly of Dad. " You see that big square white building at the foot of the hill facing this one ? That's the school the company gave the district. They were delighted with it and there was a tremendous do when the foundation stone was laid. And will you believe it ? There was a priest, and we thought he had just come to say a prayer and give the place his blessing, but suddenly they upped with a lamb and he cut the throat of the poor wee thing all over the foundation stone. That's nothing to do with Christianity, I thought. But it's their own place. That's what Dad always says. It's their own place. They must do things their own way. They're funny, mind you. They built the school too big. That's one of their weaknesses. They build everything too big. They're building a town hall down in Mitrovitsa. You'd think the place must be the size of Glasgow to look at it. But Dad says it's no use raging at them for it. Just reckon with it on your side, and see that when they get in trouble on their side that they understand just how they caused themselves the trouble."

She knitted a row or two of a jumper, and laid it by to say, " It's time Dad retired. We've lived long enough abroad. We were twenty years and more out in South America. Both the children were born out there. Then we came back, and we had taken a house in Scotland, and they asked Dad to come out and have a look at this mine. They'd got the concession, you see, and they couldn't find the right way of tackling it. So Dad came out and he saw that they had to go after the ore in a roundabout way, that they'd never get it by going any of the ways that looked direct. And then it fascinated Dad, the whole problem of the place, all the labour being different sorts of people and all wanting to cut each other's throats. So I had to sell the furniture I'd just bought and the house, and come out here. And it's been a great piece of work for him. But now it's time both of us went home. We need a rest." She ran a knitting needle reflectively through her hair.

" It's difficult, you know, retiring now. Because there aren't the middle-aged men to take over the responsible jobs. There's plenty of good youngsters, but not men of forty to fifty.

They're the ones that got killed in the war. So it's a temptation to the old ones to wait on till the youngsters get a bit older. And Dad's got together a nice crowd here. He's got the right spirit. You see it's difficult here, they've got to be good in the mines and good with the people. There has to be a clear understanding about that in this sort of country. Dad always says to everybody who comes out here to the mines, 'Now, you've got to be polite to the Yugoslavs, for it's their country, and we're only guests here.' But some of them don't take the hint, particularly if they've been nobodies at home. They look to lord it over the Slavs here then. Sooner or later we get to hear of it if they do. The Yugoslavs only report it if one of our people is rude to an officer. The Army is sacred to them, you know. I do believe it's more sacred than the Church is at home for we don't think it's so terrible to laugh at a minister. But anyway it comes out one way or another. I caught a common wee body making a face after I had taken a doctor's wife from Belgrade round the bridge club when she thought I'd turned my back, and we watched the husband and found he was just the same. So they found themselves in the train for London before they knew where they were."

She drew her hand across her forehead and down till her chin was cupped in it and then sighed into the palm, looking downward: the most Scots of gestures. "But it's terrible here in some ways! The way they treat the women! And the law's behind them, mind you!" She shuddered! and told a story of a cultivated Bosnian woman, a graduate of Belgrade and Vienna universities, who had come to the mines to work as a chemist, had married a Serbian mining engineer, and been left a widow after some years; and had found herself visited by his peasant family, who seized all her furniture and every penny of the dead man's savings, as the inheritance laws of the country permitted them to do, and made the startling demand that she should return with them and marry his brother. She spoke as one who had savoured the full horror of the subjection of women, as it is when it is actually practised and not merely dreamed about in a voluptuous reverie: a plundering, a mutilation, an insult to the womb and life, an invocation to mud and death. It was evident that, like all people who have lived long in exile, she sometimes felt that everything peculiar to the strange place where she



found herself was a spreading sore, bubo of a plague that will infect and kill if there is not instant flight to the aseptic. But she was disciplined. She knew what shadowed her for the mere shadow that it was. After she had shuddered she instantly grew stable. She turned her head, which was lioness-massive, towards the green and red hills, the willowed stream in the valleys, and said she loved them all.

At half-past four we were to go down the hill to the tennis courts ; for it was a saint's day that was a public holiday, and the whole mining staff was to be there, because a famous professional player had come down for the day from Belgrade. First we had to perform some of those trivial domestic rites which are delicious to women like myself, who have had to work at a specialised task all their lives. Mrs. Mac's knitting had to be rolled up and her work-basket set in order. She moved with a slowness that was a sign of richness ; cream does not pour quickly. We had to persuade the Aberdeen terrier to be shut in the house lest he should follow us. It seemed that the creature who had been sitting at my feet so gravely all afternoon, putting himself in just the right position to be scratched under the left ear, was the victim of an intemperate passion for balls. It was like hearing that a good sound Hegelian philosopher was given to drink. " Well, we'll away ! " sighed Mrs. Mac. We passed down a path through an orchard, round a curve to the tennis ground. It was superbly placed. Beyond the courts rose the peaked hill crowned with ruins, creamy with wild flowers that grew strong among the bushes.

The game had already begun, and it had fallen, as games between professionals and true amateurs are apt to do, into the pattern of a dance. The Serb professional sent the ball first into the left-hand corner of the court, and the English amateur returned it ; then the Serb professional sent it into the right-hand corner of the court, and the English amateur returned it. Then the ball fell just over the net, and stayed there. Though the professional had not to exert himself to impose this pattern on the game he was nevertheless still working out a problem : how to economise his expenditure of effort to the minimum degree. He had succeeded so far that he never needed to hurry, he was always moving slowly to where the ball was going to be. It would have been entertaining to watch him had not the spectators been as remarkable on

precisely the same count of graceful economy. An audience proves its discipline by its capacity for stillness. Those who have never practised continuous application to an exacting process cannot settle down to simple watching; they must chew gum, they must dig the peel off their oranges, they must shift from foot to foot, from buttock to buttock. But the people round this tennis court were calm and true in their attention. Their eyes and chin smiled neatly from left to right and from right to left, no further than was necessary to follow the ball, and their lips were quiet mouths, their fingers quiet hands, their bodies closely furled.

There were present most of the men who worked at the mines and mills at other than manual labour, and two sorts of women: their wives, and the women who were themselves working here, as secretaries and scientific workers and household administrators. Sight could not tell one the difference between the two sorts. They were alike curled and shining about the head, for here, as everywhere in Yugoslavia which has seen the glint of money, the women are at least as well coiffed as they are in Vienna, and their clothes were discreet yet gay. Many were beautiful. There was one White Russian, always to be remembered: an office worker, whose face was clear-cut and cold yet tender, whose figure was armoured with elegance yet fluid with a grace wilder than ordinary motion. There was a Montenegrin girl, handsome as a hero, born to live under black heights crowned with snow, under skies where eagles circle. There were Englishwomen, to go with gardens. But even these highly individualised women were, like the men who sat with them, rubbed down by the pressure of a common purpose to what was not uniformity so much as unanimity. The mine shaped them. They worked in the interest of the maintenance of themselves and their kind, as peasants do, though modern industry was their medium; and they had joined to their educated brilliance the sacred grimness of the peasant that will not be vanquished by his environment. Here, certainly, Yugoslavia might take the gifts of the West without fearing that they were poisoned, and might learn a formula for prosperity that would let it exploit its economic resources without danger to its human resources.

The slanting sunshine of late afternoon emphasised with bright light and black shadows the sugar-loaf sharpness of the

peaked hill above us, the fishbone fineness of the ruins on its summit. Some cattle wandered up there among the burning bushes, incandescent like pious beasts that had received their reward here on earth and been transfigured; it could be seen that some purple flowers as well as white grew among the long grasses. There stood at my side the Gospodin Mac: he and my husband had just arrived, hot but contented from their tour of the miracles in the mill. "I see you're having a good look at our castle," he said. "I suppose you know that's where Stephen Dushan strangled his father, Stephen Dechanski." I exclaimed, "But I thought that happened at Zvechan, not at Trepcha." He answered, "But this is not Trepcha. Trepcha is the valley head where the mine is, down here we are at Zvechan." I said, "I wish I could go up and look at it," but the woman beside me objected, "There is nothing to be seen now, only some broken walls. And you could not go up in those shoes, there are snakes up there."

That there should be snakes in the castle of Zvechan was most fitting. The event which had come to pass on that cone had not been compact; it had dragged along its deadly length. There were the years when Stephen Dechanski and his father Milutin had hated one another, when the son had, like a hunted beast, imitated the stillness of a stone, that he might not be struck dead. There were the years when Stephen Dechanski might have lived according to his nature, Milutin being dead, but instead provoked a repetition of his earlier peril by the offence he offered to a son, of whom nothing was more certain than that he was the most dangerous of all his stock. Again he imitated the stillness of a stone, but not in order that he might escape destruction. Here on this bronze crest he had lain quiet in order to be the doomed mark of the sweeping sword, wielded by an executioner whom he had begotten by his flesh and instructed by his policy. Destiny is another name for humanity's half-hearted yet persistent search for death. Again and again peoples have had the chance to live and show what would happen if human life were irrigated by continual happiness; and they have preferred to blow up the canals and perish of drought. They listen to the evil counsel of the grey falcon. They let their throats be cut as if they were black lambs. The mystery of Kossovo was behind this hill. It is behind all our lives.

It was behind this community. It was childish to suppose that these people of the mine could offer a formula for the future well-being of the South Slavs ; or even for themselves. It was not childish to regard them and their effect on their surroundings as wholly admirable. But this was only a clearing in the jungle hewn by pioneers whom some peculiar genetic excellence, some inspiring oddity of environment, had made superior to their fellows. These people could not save South-Eastern Europe, because they could not save England : which, indeed, would certainly not save them, if their existence was at stake. These people stood for life ; it is impossible to maintain that a large part of England does not stand for death. The men and women of Trepcha were not of the highest social or economic importance in their origins. None, I imagine, had had a duke for a father or was heir to a million. They came from homes where there was upheld a tradition of comfort and fine manners, but where there was no chance to enjoy either unless each generation worked. They therefore knew better than those above them as a paid athlete earning his keep by daily performance realises more intensely than any amateur that he must not poison his strength by alcohol or unwholesome food, that it is good for a man to be temperate and precise and to respect the quality of others. But the people who determine the fate of England have not learned that lesson ; for we are still governed by our great houses.

There is no sense in a house of extravagant size, unless it is the seat of a small court such as all forces in European history have combined to eliminate, or the home of a devotee inspired by passionate charity to feed and house all comers. Yet the pride of those who occupy such "places" is quantitative. They exult in the number and magnitude of their rooms, the extent of their gardens and glass-houses and stables, the troops of their servants and grooms and gardeners. It is rarely the harmonious proportions of their homes that please them, and there indeed lies their true destruction. For they have lost their taste, which left them during the nineteenth century, and has scarcely been recovered save by those separated from their own class by some barrier such as exceptional gifts, physical weakness or homosexuality. The proof is written on their walls by their family portraits ; beside their Holbeins and Van Dycks, their Gainsboroughs and Reynoldses and Lawrences, hang their

Dicksees and Millais and Herkomers, Sargents and Laszlos and Birleys. The eye has lost its acuteness because the well-being of the whole organism does not depend on sight or any other of its senses. These people would eat well, if they were blind and deaf and dumb, because the industrial revolution and colonial expansion had in the past combined to drop food into their mouths.

Having lost their taste, they lost their souls. For they could no longer base their standards on quality, and so developed their pride in quantity. But a quantity of possessions, on the scale that they have learned to enjoy them, can only be the massed result of past achievements. They cannot have any relation to present achievement. Therefore these people turn away from life. The best of them escape into concentration on the craft knowledge of certain pursuits, such as horsemanship and shooting and fishing, which does not give them the general good sense that often follows from the practice of a craft, because of the insane emotional exaltation engendered by their sense of superiority to those who, by reason of intellectual preoccupations or economic insufficiency, are unwilling to exchange all other interests for these exercises. It cannot be conceived, if the proposition is examined coldly, that a Conservative society, which behaves as if hunting were as sacred as the practice of religion, does not make each of its members a fool for life. Those who preserve enough mental vigour to make their mark in public life sit on the benches of Parliament with a majesty related to some other period in our history; and their contact with the present is the reading of memoranda prepared by experts, whom they are apt to distrust because of their different social origins. They have certain principles to which they are ponderously loyal; they protect mass accumulations of past effort and deny the claims of the present. They would not lift a finger to defend the Gospodin Mac and his officers. They would not understand the beauty and ingenuity of their work at Trepcha, because it was not hunting and shooting, because it was modern. They would become moderately excited about it as a source of dividends, but they would let international politics take a direction perilous to the maintenance of the mine, because they were still in the nineteenth century and could not believe that English authority was not absolute the whole world over, and English capital inviolably safe. This governing class meant death for England, however well scattered Englishmen

might serve life ; and therefore English example could not mean salvation for Yugoslavia.

I said to the Gospodin Mac, " Are the Foreign Office and the Legation people interested in you ? " He answered, " Not in the least. Though I've often thought they might be. After all we're an important British influence in the Balkans. But they've never even told me what to do in case of war. I should ask them more insistently, I suppose. But you know what these diplomats are, they're bored with you, and you get bored with them." There is nothing more to the discredit of the great house than the tendency of its children to fret for their homes in the Foreign Legations. Social extremes meet in exile. The average English diplomat *en poste* anywhere but the great familiar capitals, in Paris, Berlin, Rome or Vienna, reacts exactly like a young woman who has given up duty at the haberdashery counter to marry a young man in a Continental branch of a bacon firm. There is the same frenzied interest in clothes, and the same resentful indifference to the exotic surroundings. This is not an aristocratic attitude, but the great house no longer produces aristocrats but only the privileged.

Their privileges are enormous, and they afford ill examples for the ambitions of other classes. Their wealth fascinates and impresses the rest of society because it is inherited. To be fortunate from the womb, to be so fortunate that we can outstrip the curse of Adam all the way from the cradle to the grave, this is the fate we would have chosen for ourselves in our childhood ; and therefore it is what we would desire for our children, since when we think of them we are all childish. We look at the great house, with its obvious foundation of secular wealth, and we regard it as evidence that our hopes can be gratified ; and thus thrift, that most innocent of virtues, which is rediscovered every time a child puts by a sweet for to-morrow, is enlarged and degraded into that swollen monster of insensate expectation, the desire to invest savings in return for enormous and eternal dividends.

We have no basis for our hopes in practice or theory. The wealth that sustains the great house was usually made by ancestors who had the luck to seize land or mineral rights or a monopoly of trade in the days before society had learned to protect itself from exploitation, or to discover some means of cheapening articles for which there is a widespread and perma-

nent demand. The first form of luck cannot be enjoyed in the present stabilised world, and the second occurs more and more rarely in our highly competitive industrial system. Nor can it be believed that ordinary savings are so scarce that borrowers need pay a very high and perpetual rate of interest on them. But the whole of our economic structure is based on that pretence, and a millstone of greed is tied round the neck of every industrial enterprise, calculated to be just as heavy as its power can bear without collapse. Even here at Trepcha the dividends that were paid out to the shareholders must have been a handicap on the mine's social value. It was true that a million pounds had been put into the mine before it yielded its ore, but the price which is paid for all such advances is altogether excessive. Much went to the distant dividend-drawer, who cared not a hoot for the miners or for Yugoslavia, but he, poor dog, helpless as any one else in this chaotic world, was facing enormous political risks and might presently draw no dividends at all. International finance is not so Machiavellian as the simpler forms of Socialist and Fascist propaganda pretend. Its fault is probably that it pulls too few strings rather than too many, and it can no longer be counted as among the major causes of war. But it is like a learned but deaf and prejudiced judge sitting on the bench at a trial raising tremendous issues of personal destiny and juristic principle. Sometimes it hears and is wise, sometimes it babbles.

These people of the Trepcha mines were not wholly innocent ; for the England which was inferior to them nevertheless existed by their consent. It is probable that the Gospodin Mac was an old-fashioned Scottish Liberal, reared in reverence for Mr. Gladstone, and it is certain that he was a Radical in spirit ; again and again he betrayed his sense that the spirit of society was not loyal to the creative spirit that expressed itself in sound mining and sound administration. His wife would have witnessed a revolution, had it been the right one, with the sturdy approval of a housewife who sees a slutty neighbour at last tackling her spring cleaning. But most of the others who sat round the tennis court would, I think, have been fiercely conservative. They would have leaped to the defence of the forces which were working for their destruction ; they would at least have excused, if they would not have totally exonerated, any governor who murdered those revolutionaries who were

seeking to come to their relief. Everywhere such men as these, men of definite and distinguished action, tend to vote for the maintenance of the great house. They cannot give any close intellectual justification for their feelings. Plainly they are obeying their instincts; and instincts, it is proverbial, are sound. But that is a self-flattering lie we humans tell ourselves, which was disproved by the peak above us, goal of Stephen Dechanski's indeflectable instinct for death.

My husband said, "It is time that we must go," and we began our farewells. I felt real sorrow that I should probably never see these people again, and as I left I turned to a group of men and women whom I had not met and said "Good-bye," although I knew it was an action appropriate to a royal person leaving a bazaar, because I wanted to look squarely at their pleasantness. But in the very intensity of my admiration for them I realised how impotent the West was to help the rest of the world; for it produces individuals so entirely excellent, so single-minded and honest and fastidious, that a Paradisal society should long ago have established itself, had not there been within them a dark force impelling them to trace with their actions, so delicate and graceful when considered separately, a hideous and gloomy pattern. Here, through the genius of the Gospodin Mac, that force had been so far as possible frustrated, and the Western virtues showed themselves in their purity. But this was a purely local exorcism. The West, as I thought of it extending thousands of miles beyond the setting sun, was astonishing in its corruption, in its desire for death, and in its complacency towards its disease.

Only in Macedonia, it seemed to me, had I seen mankind medicining its corruption, trying to raise up its love of life so that it might contend with its love of death and defend the kingdom of human affairs from a government that should extend only over the grave. I remembered how Bishop Nikolai had seemed to wrestle with this desire to die as if he were throwing a steer, though his columnar body had stood stock-still in his rich robes. I remembered how the monks of Sveti Naum had held up an enticing symbol of life to those who had lost their taste for it. I remembered with hope that we were going that evening to Petch, and would the next day visit the great monastery which Stephen had founded at Dechani, for it is a seminary for the training of monks, and there it would be made



plain whether these achievements in Macedonia were the works of individual genius, or whether the Orthodox Church were in possession of wisdom which it could impart to all its children : if that were so, then even the mediocre could perform such feats, and the preference for life could be established everywhere. We were standing at the gate now : Dragutin was waiting for us beside the automobile, his hand to his forehead, looking as if he had brought our gold-harnessed horses to the tent of Tsar Lazar. The Gospodin Mac said, " You'll like Dechani, it's a beautiful place up there in the mountains, it's like a Highland glen," and his wife said, " I hope you'll not be shown round by that wee monk with the awful goloshes." At last we slid down the hillside that was like Golder's Green, that was like Chislehurst, that was truly very Heaven, and the dark, proliferating complexity of Slavonic life again absorbed us.

### *Petch I*

When we got back to the hotel Constantine was walking up and down in a frenzy of impatience, holding his watch in his hand. That fretfulness which we had begun to notice as part of the disintegration that Gerda had worked upon him, now took the form of a continual allegation that everybody but himself was either too late or too early for every event in the daily routine. If he saw people drinking coffee it seemed to him that they might have done it with propriety an hour earlier or an hour later, but not then. Now we had come back to the hotel twenty minutes before the time set for our departure for Petch, but it was to him as if we were very late, so late that we would have to put off the journey till the next morning. As we got out of the car he ran towards us, waving his watch and crying out reproaches, but Dragutin jumped out and faced him with the detached malevolent intensity and cold health of the snake. It was day by day more apparent that he was repelled by Constantine's sick state and would have liked to chase him away from us. Though we could not understand what he said to him, we felt the chill of its insolence, and there was suddenly a muffled quality about Constantine, as if he had slipped on a padded garment to protect himself. I wondered if there had been a scene between the two of which I knew nothing. But

Constantine only said, "Well you know we must not start too late, for until a short time ago this road was the most dangerous in Yugoslavia." "But it is so no longer," said Dragutin, and began to load the car with our luggage.

They began to wrangle on the point again, when we had travelled some distance from the town and were passing through low hills covered with scrub-oak, now ruddy with the early sunset. Where the road cut across a twisting valley we saw a car drawn up by the roadside and a man standing on a raised hillock, his head bent towards the west. We slowed down and saw that he was crossing himself, and we stopped dead. "When he has finished I will ask him why he is praying here," said Dragutin; "perhaps it is a holy place where some Turkish beg was killed." When the man stepped down from the hillock he shouted to him, "Why are you praying, friend?" The man came up to our car and answered, "Because I am glad to be alive. But are you not English? Listen how well I speak English! My friends in England laugh at me and say I speak so well that I speak Scotch. For all the war I was at school at Aberdeen. And afterwards I came back here, and because of my good education I became a dealer in factory-made clothes and that is why I am praying here now. For very often I had to make this journey from Kossovaska Mitrovitsa to Petch, and because of the brigands I was always very frightened, particularly just at this spot, for they used to come down this valley and lay a tree-trunk across the road. I used to think of my dear wife and my little children, and pray to God for protection, and now that there is no more danger I am thanking Him for giving it to me. But since you come from England I would like very much to talk to you. Are you going to Petch? Are you staying there long? Ah, well, then I shall see you, but now I must hurry, for I must go to supper with a friend of mine who has a farm outside the town." "You see," said Constantine, as he left us in dust, "he said the road was dangerous." "He said it had been dangerous," Dragutin corrected him, "and he showed by his action he believed it was so no longer. I believe in God as much as anybody, but on a road where I thought there were still brigands I would not leave my car and stand beside it praying, I would pray as I drove, and so would any sane man."

The brigands who had operated on this road were by way

of being political insurgents. They were Albanians claiming to represent the element which had been dispossessed by the redistribution of land made by the Yugoslavian Government after the war. All over the Balkans there is an association between highway robbery and revolutionary idealism which the Westerner finds disconcerting, but which is an inevitable consequence of the Turkish conquest. This crystallised the conditions of the fourteenth century; and in the Middle Ages anybody who stepped out of the niche into which he was born had no other resource but banditry, as he could neither move to another district nor change his trade. If a peasant excited the displeasure of authority by standing up for the rights of his kind, he had to make himself scarce and thereafter live in cover of the forests and make forays on rich travellers, alike under the Nemanyas and under the Turks. Hence the Balkan peoples are not, to this day, initially shocked by a rebel who professes political idealism though he habitually loots and murders, though sooner or later they become irritated by the practical results of this application of medieval theory to modern conditions. The weak point in the programme is the present lack of rich travellers. A Robin Hood working on the road between Petch and Kossovka Mitrovitsa would earn a few good meals in spring and autumn and none at all in summer and winter. So he would have to fall back either on robbery from travellers of inconsiderable means, or regular exactions from the local peasants: that is to say, he would become a pest to the very class which he claimed to be championing. This is the real reason why I.M.R.O., the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, perished; and these Albanians could not surmount the difficulty, particularly after the Trepcha mines brought money to the district. The peasants became so anxious to get on with their lives and enjoy their share of this new prosperity that, actively or passively, they were all on the side of the gendarmes. But even so the business of exterminating these bandits must have been formidable. To the right of this road runs a wall of mountains, fissured with deep wooded glens, and to the left lies a flat plain, green and sweet and fertile as our Vale of Pewsey. The loot was as tempting as the cover was kind.

"Look, there is Tserna Gora, there is Montenegro," said Constantine; and it was so. The country, the fact of it, the essence of it, not just a part of it, was before our eyes. A wall

of mountains ran south from Kossovska Mitrovitsa, another wall ran north to meet it from the misty limits of the plain, but they stopped short of meeting; and above the gap was a still higher wall, a black cliff-face, half as tall as the sky. That was Tserna Gora, Monte Negro, which may fairly be translated as the Black Mountain, but meant nothing of the sort when the name was given, for then it meant the mountain of Strashimir Ivo the Black, that is to say the outlaw, a Serbian chief who fled there half a century after Kossovo and established a Christian principality. The Turks did not follow him, not for a couple of centuries. They sat on the plain and looked up at this colossal fortress, this geological engineering feat that brings rock as it is seen only deep below earth in caverns and abysms and hangs it in an area that had seemed reserved for clouds.

About the mouth of this gap were scattered agreeable foothills, on which we discerned as we grew nearer the mosques and cubes of a city. The buildings glimmered blue-white about us as we drove into an evening iced and shadowed by the precipice at the end of the gorge, but still light enough to disclose the tottering and dilapidated charm of Petch. It is not unlike a Swiss town, for a river rushes beside the high-street, bringing the cold breath of the glacier with it, and as the light fails the mountains seem to draw closer; but the place knows nothing so solid as a chalet. Nobody can imagine how insubstantial an inhabited building can be till he has visited Petch. Most of the houses we passed, and nearly all the shops, could be knocked down in half an hour by any able-bodied person with a small pick, and quite a number could be razed to the ground. Many are made of thin planks and petrol tins, and such as had essayed the use of plaster had been stricken with a kind of architectural mange.

We went up the high-street, which was very broad, with a breadth that was the more remarkable because the shops and inns on each side were so low and rickety. A stream ran down one side of it, one of those channelled by the Turks to take the drainage. It was the hour of the Corso, and a crowd of people, mostly very tall, were shuffling up and down, their passionate faces and fantastic dresses shot with two aspects, both equally passionate and fantastic, by the conflicting lights of the dusk and the white downpour from the electric standards. There was contrapuntal sense of movement, for there was the leisurely

shuffle of the crowd, the quick ripple of the stream in the roadway, and the leaping and dancing of the river which could be seen through the gaps in the houses, driving over a wide bed of shingle among poplars and willows. Yet I was reminded of a ghost town I once visited in Colorado, where a ribbon of untrodden dust led between windowless frame houses to an abandoned mine.

The hotel received us into a vast eccentric bosom. It was built round a restaurant, a strange irregular quadrilateral apartment, with a gallery and a line of super-Corinthian pillars marching across it, all painted a hot dull maroon. It was yet another specimen of the innate architecture of the Balkans, which seems to have been run up without a pattern by somebody who had never seen a building of the type he was constructing. In this restaurant a few people in Western clothes, probably functionaries, sat about at the tables, attended by several waiters; all, because of the vastness of the room, in which the beams of the electric light wandered loosely and ineffectively, seemed to be featureless. We went upstairs and traversed passages that were true to the Petch fashion for insubstantiality. When the floor creaked underfoot it was making no idle complaint, it had indeed suffered an injury.

The manager flung open the door of a bedroom and we looked in on an ebony-haired young officer, his olive-green coat tapering exquisitely to a dandyish waist, who was standing at an iron table and washing his hands in an enamel basin with bright pink soap. The scent of the soap was so powerful, so catastrophically floral, that we remained in a still and startled semicircle, looking down at this magical lather. It was as if one had opened a door and found a man taking a white rabbit out of a top-hat. It was the manager who first recovered his self-possession. "It seems the room is occupied," he explained to us. Reluctantly we retired, our eyes on the extraordinary soap. "But the officer is going quite soon," he said, when we were out on the landing. "If you will sit down here you will not have long to wait." "Have you not other rooms?" asked my husband severely, in German. "Yes," the manager answered, "but there is something special about this room and the next, I have often remarked it, I would like you to have them." "And I?" said Constantine, "do I also have to wait?" "Yes," said the manager, "there is another officer

in yours. I do not know why they have not gone. They said they would be gone at half-past five. But of course they are both young, and when one is young one often does not know how the time is passing. You will find these comfortable chairs."

About that he was wrong. They were cane chairs with large holes in the seats. But it was not disagreeable to occupy them, for they were set beside a table where a chambermaid was ironing a pile of sheets, and she was a very agreeable person. She was a Hungarian, not very young or pretty, but she had a jolly, monkeyish face, with russet cheeks and shining brown eyes, which she twisted into amusing grimaces. The sheets were very coarse, so that to iron them required a real muscular effort, and every time she responded to the strain with a delicious expression, a blend of ascetic voluptuousness and self-mockery. It was quite pleasant sitting there in the warm dusk. The sheets smelt like toasted tea-cakes. I nearly went to sleep several times, but I was awakened because the doors of a cupboard just beside me kept on bursting open for no other cause but sheer flimsiness, sheer inability to stay put together another instant, disclosing a number of unidentifiable objects wrapped in brown paper. I remembered a Russian novel I had once reviewed in which the description of a bedroom had ended with the sentence "And under the bed there was an enormous enema".

At last the officers clattered down the passage, and we took over their rooms. Ours was still tenanted by the scent of the pink soap, the spectre of an unthinkable lush and oleaginous summer. We changed our clothes, and just as we were ready Constantine knocked on the door and came in looking very pleased and happy. "That little Hungarian chambermaid," he announced, "she is perhaps not so good as she might be, or perhaps she is a little better. I have told her I want a hot, hot bath, because I have a little fever and I want to sweat, and she says to me, 'Yes, you will have a hot, hot bath, myself I will make it very hot, but who will give you the massage afterwards? Is it myself also?' Ah, it is so with all our chambermaids, they are very naughty, but very good also, you saw how she worked." He turned his back on us to straighten his tie among the delirious reflections of the extravagantly framed mirror, with a sudden revival of the gallant spirit of self-parody that had so often enchanted us, when we had first travelled with him; and

all three of us laughed. But I noticed that the back of his neck was fiery red, and I said, "But what about this fever? Constantine, are you really ill?" He whirled about and answered, "It is from my hand." We stared at it in horror: the whole hand between the knuckles and the wrist was scarlet and pulpy. "But what happened?" "Just this morning as we got up from breakfast," said Constantine, "I was stung by a great ferocious insect with huge wings. It was either a wasp or a hornet. But you did not notice."

We both hung about him and made penitent and sympathetic murmurs, and suddenly we were friends as we had been at the beginning. He was to us as our child and a great man, and we were to him as his father and mother and his pupils, and there was no barrier between us and our words. But soon his face grew vacant, as if he were listening to a distant voice, and then hardened. He said, "Yes, I feel very ill, but you need not bother, I will come downstairs, and though I will not be able to eat one mouthful, I will sit with you when we have dinner, and afterwards I will take you a walk round the town." "You will do nothing of the sort," said my husband, "you will go to bed and have some dinner sent up to you." "No," said Constantine. "I know your habits very well now. The walk round the town after dinner, you would feel terribly if you missed it. And I know what you English are." My husband said suddenly a short word which has so rarely been spoken in my presence that I wonder how it is I understand it, and taking Constantine's arm in his, led him from the room. When he came back, he said, "Forgive me, my dear. But I thought this situation could only be handled by the natural man. And do not worry. He was quite happy to be sent to bed."

We dined in the restaurant of the principal hotel and there we ate excellent trout, but not until after an immense delay. The apartment was so large that as soon as a waiter took an order he broke into a trot towards the kitchen; and I have no doubt that the kitchen was also vast, and that the cooks had to stop their work every now and then to rebuild a wall or relay a floor. We passed the time in spelling out the news in the Belgrade newspapers which were constantly brought in by little dark boys of distinguished appearance in very ragged clothes, and in talking to a young man who came up to us and asked in German if he could be of any help to us, since we were strangers.

He told us he was a Croat lawyer, come to be clerk of the local law court, and he gave a very pleasant impression of youthful simplicity and courtesy, of a real knightliness. He left us when our trout was brought, and as soon as we had finished it we had another visitor. A dark full-bodied man, more smartly dressed than anybody else in the restaurant, had been watching us from a nearby table for some time and now came up to us. He said to my husband, "Good evening. It is interesting to meet a German so far from home." "I am not a German," said my husband, "I am English."

The dark man looked at his reply as if it might be picked up, carried away, dropped down, buried, or accorded any treatment except belief. "Yet you speak German like a German," he said. "That is because I spent some years as a boy in Hamburg," answered my husband, "and I have spent much of my life doing business with Germans." The dark man said nothing to distract us from his disbelief, and my husband said testily, "And you? You are a German; what are you doing here?" "Oh, I am not a German!" exclaimed the dark man with an air of surprise. "Yet you speak like a German," said my husband, "That is because I am a Dane," said the dark man. After an instant he appeared to become intensely irritated with my husband's face which is long and intelligent, and he left us with a curt farewell. "He does not believe me when I say I am English," commented my husband, "but he is infuriated when I do not believe him when he says 'I am a Dane'. He feels I am not playing the game. That means that he is a German." "Could he possibly be a Dane?" "Not possibly," said my husband; "he does not even speak with a North German accent. That man has spoken Berliner German from his infancy."

At that point Dragutin, who had been sitting on the other side of the room, came up to say good-night to us. We gathered that he was telling us that Petch was very depressing after Trepcha, and that he had never seen anything more wonderful than the house and works he had seen at Goru. After he had gone it struck me that Goru is not the name of a place, but a word meaning up in the mountain. He had, in fact, been to the mine-head. "This is too frightful!" I said. "Do you remember when I thought I saw Dragutin at that canteen just before we had lunch in the mess? Well, I did! He must have



got a friend to take him up there ! ” “ What is so frightful about that ? ” asked my husband. “ It means,” I answered, “ that he went off and left Constantine, probably without asking permission, so that instead of Constantine going off for a solitary drive and feeling superior to us and all the people at the mines, because he was a poet and acting poetically, he had to sit in the hotel feeling left-out and despised.” “ My God, I believe you’re right ! ” exclaimed my husband. We gazed at each other in real horror. “ I do not think Dragutin would deliberately disobey Constantine,” he said, “ I think he simply forgot him. He knows quite well that Constantine is not a whole man, and that he has been in some way destroyed, and he fears an infection. Now I understand another cause for Anti-Semitism ; many primitive peoples must receive their first intimation of the toxic quality of thought from Jews. They know only the fortifying idea of religion ; they see in Jews the effect of the tormenting and disintegrating ideas of scepticism. Dragutin sees a man made as miserable as sickness, as poverty, as disgrace could make him, by an idea which is so mighty that it can exercise this power even though it was let loose on him by a woman. No wonder he is appalled. Well, let us go and get some sleep.”

So we climbed the creaking staircase and came to our room, passing the little Hungarian chambermaid as she burrowed among candles in a store cupboard, still busy ; and we slept well, though once I woke and turned on the light and watched a frieze of five mice pass along the skirting. In the morning as many beetles watched me as I dried after my antique bath. But all was clean, aseptically clean ; and for the explanation there was the chambermaid down on her knees, her right hand swishing the suds across the flimsy floor, her head rolling from side to side and a tune coming in a half hum, half whistle, through her teeth. We bade her good-morning and told her she worked too hard for a pretty girl, and she looked up laughing, and from a plank in front of her broke off a huge splinter like a piece of toast. “ Yes,” said Constantine, who just then came out of his room, “ she is a good girl, and she has great sensibility. Last night she came into my room and she said so kindly, ‘ Ah, I would so like to be with you, for there is something about you very sweet, and you are far more cultured than most men who come to this hotel, but I see you are too ill, and

so I will bring you a little orange drink instead.' "

We went down and had our breakfast outside the principal hotel, and sat over our coffee for an unnecessary length of time, enchanted by the scene. The most enchanting element in it was a number of pretty little girls with dark hair sun-bleached on the surface, and fair delicate bronze skins, who darted about in most beautiful costumes, consisting of fitted jackets and loose trousers gathered at the ankles, cut out of brilliant curtain material with an extreme sense of elegance that was not of an Oriental sort. The effect is too feminist. The little girl is set apart as a little girl, as a possible object for poetical feeling, but her will is respected, she can run and jump as she likes. We ceased to look at them only to wonder about several cheap cars waiting in front of the hotel, which as we breakfasted filled up with people apparently strangers to each other, who all held lemons in their hands and looked exceedingly apprehensive. "They fear to be sick," explained Constantine, "and it is to prevent it that they are going to suck lemons. They are going to travel through Montenegro, to Kolashin or Tsetinye or Podgoritsa or Nikshitch, and they must go by motor bus or by car, since there is no railway in all Montenegro, it is too mountainous." And looking up the road at the walls of rock which barred the way, that seemed obvious. Nothing but a Simplon tunnel that took a whole day to pass could meet the case. "The poor passengers," continued Constantine, "they have reason for fearing to be sick, and even to die. For the Montenegrins are a race of heroes, but since the Turks have gone they have nothing to be heroic about, and so they are heroic with their motor cars. A Montenegrin chauffeur looks on his car as a Cossack or a cowboy looks on a horse, he wishes to do tricks with it that show his skill and courage, and he is proud of the wounds he gets in an accident as if they were scars of battle. It is a superb point of view, but not for the passenger. One cannot work out a formula, not in philosophy, not in aesthetics, not in religion, not in nothing that would make it good for the passengers. Yet there have to be passengers for there to be a chauffeur. It is a very grave disharmony."

There came to our table at that moment a lean and hard-bitten and harassed man in uniform, who introduced himself as the Chief of Police at Petch. He spoke American English, for he had been in the Middle West nearly twenty years, and he was

consumed by that emotion so socially disruptive, so critical of all our sentimental pretences, that it has no name: the opposite of nostalgia, a sick distaste for the fatherland. "All here is as strange to me as it is to you," he complained. "They asked me to come back from the United States and become Chief of Police, and because I was for Yugoslavia I obeyed, but I made a mistake. There is too much to do. These folks here won't act right unless you make 'em, and to make 'em you have to know every one of them by sight. Will you believe that I have to come down every evening and watch the Corso, just to see how they all act and get in my mind who's who? Can you imagine folks acting that way in the States?" There are nearly fourteen thousand inhabitants of Petch; in the plain which stretches from Petch south to Prizren, a matter of fifty-five miles or so, there were in Turkish days a steady six hundred assassinations a year; I found some pathos in the lot of a gentleman who was trying to induce by individual attention such a large number of people, who had been shaped by such a tradition, to behave like good Babbitts. My husband said, "But many of your charges look very charming," and I added, "the little girls are really lovely." The Chief of Police said in astonishment, "Do you really think so?" "But certainly," we said. "Oh, no, you are mistaken!" he exclaimed. "But we have seen the most exquisite little girls," I began, but Constantine interrupted me. "The Chief of Police," he explained, "is a Montenegrin, and he is trying to tell you, if you would only let him, that only up there behind that wall at the end of the street in Montenegro are people really charming and little girls really lovely." "Well, I doubt if a man not fortified by such beliefs would accept such a post," said my husband. I asked, after the Chief of Police had made exactly the speech that Constantine had anticipated, "But are not the people influenced a great deal by the monks at the Patriarchate church and the Dechani monastery?" He looked at me in bewilderment. "Influenced? But in what way?" "Why, for good," I stammered; "the monks, you know." He continued to look at me in perplexity, but just then a gendarme came in and, after saluting, whispered in his ear; and he jumped up and left us in the manner of a mother who has just heard that two of her children have been fighting and have hurt themselves.

"It is hotter than it has been," I said, as we drove out of

the town, along the road towards Montenegro, on our way to the Patriarchate church of Petch, which is nearly as famous as the monastery of Dechani.

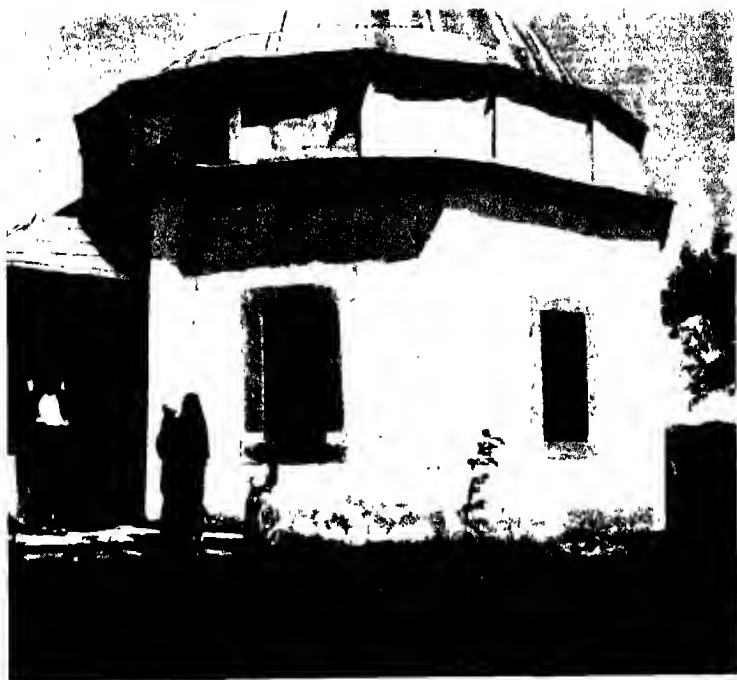
It was a very pleasant drive, with the houses thinning and showing us the rich pastures that ran up to the wooded foothills, and the brilliant river that dashed down from the gorge. "I do not think that it is hot at all," said Constantine. "But the sun is strong," I said. "I find it very weak," said Constantine. "Oh, no!" I exclaimed. "This morning at eight the stockings that I washed last night and hung at the window were quite dry." I realised that I had spoken foolishly even before he had sneered, "You have proof for everything." His face was heavy and swollen, half with fever, half with the desire to hurt. Gerda had convinced him that being a Jew he was worthless, and he wanted to establish that everybody else she despised was worthless too, so that we could crash down together to common annihilation under her blonde, blind will. The three of us kept silent till we came to the Patriarchate, which lies in a walled compound among the foothills at the opening of the gorge, low by the river under the wooded cliffs.

Through an archway we entered what seemed a decent little country estate, with proper outbuildings and a trim wood-stack, a kitchen garden as neat as a new pin, and an orchard with its trunks new-washed against blight. A very old monk, lean and brown as a tree-trunk, smiled at us but did not answer what Constantine said, and led us along an avenue to a round fountain shaded by some trees. We thought he was deaf, but he was a Russian who had never learned any Serbian during his seventeen years of exile here. While he fetched the Abbot from his house, there appeared at our elbows Dragutin, to enforce the observance of his special rite and see that we drank from the fountain. It cured all ills, he said, and bestowed also the blessing of Christ. He had brought tumblers from the automobile, so that we could drink in comfort, and indeed it was delicious beyond the nature of water.

When I had finished drinking, I looked round with satisfaction. This was a fat little estate: the buildings were not only new, they were well-kept, and on the finely tilled terraces behind the guest-house there were trim beehives of modern pattern, and the stone runner that took the fountain's overflow to a stream was weedless. I remembered the account of the Patriarchate

in that valuable book, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*, by Miss Muir Mackenzie and Miss Irby, so penetrating in its view of the Balkans that, though it was written seventy-six years ago, it still answers some questions that the modern tourist will find unanswered anywhere else. These two ladies arrived here with a guard of Moslem Albanian soldiers, with the intention of staying the night, and found terrified monks who, with an inhospitability most uncharacteristic of the Slav or the Orthodox Church, made every effort to turn them away. The ladies, who were, like so many Victorian women outside fiction, models of courage and good sense, turned their guards out of the room and talked to the monks privately, and found that the poor wretches had had all their food seized by a passing troop of Moslem Albanians, and were terrified lest the new invaders should punish them for their empty cupboards. When the ladies met the situation by sending their guards not only out of the room but out of the monastery, there was still some delay before they could get to bed, since the relative flea population of the different rooms had to be considered, and empty windows had to be fitted with glazed frames, which were not brought out till the soldiers had gone. It is a very strong compact of medieval discomfort and medieval insecurity. Nothing could be more remote from the present atmosphere, which could be best expressed by the Scottish word "douce". Yes, we were standing in as douce a wee policy as could be wished.

The Abbot still did not come. We passed some time looking at the carvings on the fountain, which had an extremely primitive air yet in one panel represented a man carrying a fairly modern rifle, but Constantine grew nervous and restless and we took him off to look at the church. It lay on our right, among some walnuts and mulberries and pines, the green ground rising steep behind it. "I have a prejudice against this church," said my husband, as we went towards it, "because a French author wrote of it, '*Elle a la couleur tendre de la chair des blondes*'." I said, in some bewilderment, "This is even more than I should have asked of you, my dear." "I felt strongly," he explained, "that he should not have followed that sentence with his next, '*Elle est bâtie de gros blocs rectangulaires, irréguliers*'. The picture one is left with is hardly pleasing." But indeed what was in the French author's mind was very



THE TOMB OF GAZI MESTAN ON KOSSOVO



THE PATRIARCHATE AT PETCH

apparent. The church is actually the colour of a fair woman's skin, where it gets some weathering but not much, say in the throat or just above the wrist; and in form it is a many-breasted Diana of Ephesus. It is an assembly of three small churches lying side by side, each with a cupola and a rounded apse, and all its masses are maternally curved. It seemed very fitting that there should come out of the porch a company of matrons in whom age had destroyed all that is evanescent in womanhood, all that is peculiar to the period of mating and child-bearing, yet who might have served gloriously as types of their sex because what was left was so plainly dedicated to all its essential purposes, the continuity of life and its harmony. They were slender and erect, like the old women of Ochrid, but lacked that aristocratic and even luxurious air which was natural enough in a town with its Byzantine past; they might have been Romans when Rome was still a sturdy republic. All of them were old enough to remember the bad days in Petch when the Turks had so encouraged the Albanian Moslems to ill-treat their Christian neighbours that at every Serb funeral the corpse was pelted with stones and filth; but they carried themselves with the most untroubled dignity. It came back to me that Miss Muir Mackenzie and Miss Irby had been immensely impressed by a woman of Petch called Katerina Simitch, a childless widow who carried on a Christian school for girls, with a courage that never broke before the persistent hostility of the Moslems. She was a nun solely because the status was useful to her in her nationalist work; the Englishwomen's descriptions of her evoke the calm and wise personality of a great statesman. Yet it is safe to say that she took her vows without impiety, for in those days Christianity and Slav nationalism must have seemed, even to the most spiritual, almost one and the same. These women who were coming out of the church would certainly be kin to Katerina Simitch's pupils, and some might even be of her blood. If she had seen them she would have felt pride. She would have taken for granted their quiet fierceness and their fleet dignity for it was hers also, and she could not have conceived Slav women otherwise; but she would have recognised a sign of new times, and rejoiced at it, in the white sleeves which were disclosed by their black cloth boleros. They were made of the striped silk which is woven in the district; in Katerina's day only a few Christian women could



afford to buy it, or even to make it, since the mulberry leaves for the silkworms cost more than Christians could afford.

We went into the porch, which formed a long hall outside the three churches. There were two more old women sitting and talking thoughtfully on a stone bench that ran round the wall, one holding a branch cut from a walnut tree. Their ease, and a proud and hospitable gesture that this woman made with her walnut branch when she saw we were visitors come to admire, recalled the history of these churches.

The first had been built in the early thirteenth century by a Patriarch named Arsenius, by order of St. Sava, who felt that the seat of the Serbian archiepiscopate, Zhitcha, was dangerously exposed to Hungarian invasion from the West and Tartar invasion from the East, and told him to find a safer shelter for it in the South. Here the growing Serbian civilisation had the centre of its spiritual life, and when Stephen Dushan was obliged to detach his church from the domination of Constantinople this became the seat of the Patriarchate. It was to meet the needs of this increasing importance that two other churches were joined to it in the following hundred years. When the Turks came the independence of the Serbian Church was destroyed, and for a time the Christian Slavs were again subject to Constantinople. But in the sixteenth century there took place the drama of the Sokolovitch brothers, which we had already heard of at Grachanitsa, to which their complicity had added the great porch. One, known as Mehmed, was taken by the Turks as a child and reared as a Janissary, and had risen to be Grand Vizier, in which office he restored the Serbian National Church and made his brother, the monk Macarius, Patriarch of Petch with many privileges. It would be interesting to know how seriously the state of such a renegade as Mehmed was regarded : whether time and repetition rubbed down the crime till it was accepted as a legitimate ruse of Christian self-preservation, or whether it preserved its primal horror. Through this porch Macarius must have walked many thousand times, and either he was not glad, not sorry, child of a twilit age, where faith was grey with incrustations of compromise, or he believed that his brother must burn in hell, and must have been sorely perturbed to consider that he could not give the saving bread and wine to his people had not his brother chosen damnation. But there exists no record of these people's interior lives. As yet humanity

has chronicled little more than its simpler and more agreeable experiences.

In any case Macarius carried on his work efficiently ; and he was succeeded by a number of able patriarchs until the Great Trek to the Danube in 1690, when the Patriarchate was transferred to its present seat at Karlovats, which we had visited among its lilacs from Belgrade. But that did not mean that the building was ever wholly abandoned. There was always some ecclesiastical activity here, even in the darkest days of the Turkish subjection during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This continuity of Christian worship resulted, as it often does, in destruction of the most valuable part of the Christian heritage. St. Mark's would be far more beautiful if Venice had not been prosperous enough to alter and adorn it for some hundreds of years after it had attained its perfection ; and here in the three churches of Petch the most exquisite Serbo-Byzantine frescoes were covered over during recent times with pious trivialities paid for by peasants who wanted to mark their appreciation of the comfort they had received there throughout the long ages of their servitude. These are now, as at Neresi, being removed from the walls, so that one may see the old beside the new, and learn again the paradox by which the greatest tragic art has been produced. In the happy Austria of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Mozart and Beethoven both looked into the dark springs of human destiny ; in the petty and sordid Austria of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which every day carried the plot for the doom of itself and Europe a stage further, there was heard the clear ripple of the waltz and the operetta. Here, at every ragged edge that joins the frescoes which were divided by from three to four hundred years, it is shown that the free and fortunate subjects of the Nemanyas could bear to contemplate the mystery of pain, while the down-trodden Christian rayahs asked only to think of favour and of prettiness. The contrast was at its most positive where a charming fresco, visibly affected by what I have called the Turkish Regency style, depicting some bland and chic angels having a party at a table obviously arranged by someone with a modish sense of fun, before a window hung with coquettish muslin curtains, was being hewn asunder and flaked off to bring to light an enormous and merciless presentation of the relationship between man and his mother.

All these early frescoes, though they range in date over two hundred years and show marked variations in style, are alike in being merciless. Here the angels sweep down like furies, the Holy Ghost is seen as a bird of prey, and at the Transfiguration the multitude is aghast, as well it might be at that demonstration that man is wholly deceived by the material world, and there is another one beyond for him to master. In the dome of one of the three churches there is a Christ Ruler of All, dressed in an amber robe and crowned with a golden halo against a silver background, confined by a whirlwind of angels, which puts before the eye, as some great music has put before the ear, the ecstasy of pain that comes from great gifts, great power, great responsibility. Sometimes this central core of harshness is disguised by the most delicious grace. One fresco represents the Mother of God feeding the infant Jesus at her breast while three women adore Him and two angels stand in waiting, which recalls a Duccio or a Giunta Pisano, but shows an even greater refinement, an ethereal force very rarely present in Italian painting. It is as if the artist was working in a world where grossness and feebleness were almost unknown, or at least under the ban of the common consciousness. But even here there is a lack of mercy. The infant Jesus is not so much a baby as a reduced adult, a microscopic sage and ruler, and He is sucking His mother's nipple with mature unsmiling greed, as if He meant to take the last drop and give her no payment of gratitude, although her body is a soft mass about Him, protecting Him as the pulp of a ripe fruit about its kernel. The resemblance between the Nemanyan and the Tudor ages is strong. So did the Elizabethan poets know that though Elizabeth was Gloriana and England glorious, God is not kind to man, not here on earth.

But the most merciless of all these frescoes was the Virgin and Child that stared out through the angels' tea-party. This is terrible, with a terror that makes the efforts at realism of later artists such as Rouault seem the fee-fo-fum of a child playing at ogres in the nursery. A vast Virgin is massive as a mother must seem to the child she picks up in her arms and carries where he has not wished to go, that is, unfairly massive; and she grips Him with fingers of masonic strength, which are as ten towers, ten lighthouses, affixed to her huge palm. Her features are as gigantesquely marked as all adults must

seem to a baby's hand, and she appears unreasonably stern, as those yet unacquainted with the dangers of this world must consider their mothers. The love and kindness published on her huge face is as a huge army entrenched about its object. At her bosom the Christ child is poised like a tiny fettered athlete, His muscular legs bared by runner's shorts, His glittering enraged face proclaiming revolt against this imprisoning benevolence and shining with the intention of flight to a remote and glorious goal which is His secret. A mind unaware of timidity had considered those questions, "Who is my brother or my brethren?" and "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" and had taken into account certain agonising arguments he had heard in the world about him.

They were still, it seemed, being carried on. Constantine turned his back on the fresco and took two letters out of his pockets, which he had already told us in the automobile he had received from Gerda and his mother that morning. He opened them both, stared at them in turn, and seemed to grow hot though the shadow of the church was cool about us. "You are worried," I said. "Why do you not leave us and go straight home to Belgrade?" He answered in a whining tone, "But if I go home I will only have to take round a French woman journalist who is coming early next week to write about us barbarians. I do not like these political Frenchwomen, they are all the same; they are all like Geneviève Tabouis and Andrée Viollis, they drag round the world and disapprove of all that real men do." He looked up at the tremendous Virgin, his upper lip lifting from his teeth in a sneer: his eyes left her and stared apprehensively into space. "I have other ideas what women should do," he said weakly, as if he were very tired. We turned away and looked at other frescoes and the great marble tombs of the Patriarchs, but he followed us restlessly, and we went out of the church.

Outside I saw a monk, whom I knew to be the Abbot because he wore the broad scarlet sash of his office, standing under a very twisted old nut tree, talking to the old women who had passed us as we went into the Church. Now that I saw them from a distance I noted, what I had not seen before, since my eyes had been fixed on their magnetic faces and their snowy sun-bright sleeves, that they wore not skirts but trousers of dark flowered material, gathered at the ankle into a black braided cuff which

seemed incongruous garments on women who might very well have been heads of colleges. They were speaking to the Abbot with a charming reverence which was due partly to their sense of his priesthood and partly to his special suitability for it ; for they were looking at him with calm and chaste approbation of his extreme good looks. He was a tall man with a clear white skin and a dark wavy beard, like one of the Assyrians in the British Museum ; everything about him spoke of quiet strength and good health. He must have pleased them by the proof he gave that their darling care, the race, was still sound. There was standing a little distance off a monk of very different appearance. He was extremely short and so round-shouldered that he was nearly hunchbacked, and his long hair and beard shone chorus-girl golden. The Abbot looked up and saw me coming out of the church with my husband and Constantine just behind me, and with a curious combination of a welcoming smile and an embarrassed gesture he moved towards us, joined by the small blond monk. He was glad to see us ; he was a Serb from Serbia and knew Constantine's name, and in any case he came of good Orthodox stock with its tradition of hospitality ; yet he was not at ease. After he had greeted us he introduced the short blond monk, saying, " This is a brother from the monastery at Dechani who came over to help me at a special service we had this morning. I am afraid he will have to go at once, if he is to catch his motor bus back."

But the little creature pressed forward and with the pinched and dwarfish vivacity of a pantomime child shook his finger at us, crying, in a peculiar German, " I know what you are thinking about me ! " It was an intensely embarrassing remark coming from one so physically odd, but at once he continued, with a great deal of trilling laughter, " You are thinking, ' How fair he is ! How can he be so fair, being a Yugoslavian ? He is fair as a German ! ' " We had, of course, been thinking nothing of the sort, for a number of Slavs, particularly Bosnians, are fairer than Germans, are as fair as Scandinavians. All that had struck us about his hair was the peculiar harshness of its colour. " I will explain the mystery to you," he tittered. " I am a Croat, yes, I am a Croat from Zagreb. But my mother, my beloved and saintly mother, she was a true German born in Austria, and she it was who gave me my golden hair ! " His little fists swept forward the curls that hung down his back so

that they covered his eyes and became tangled in his beard. "Always when I was a child people stopped in the street and said, 'Who is this child that is fair like an angel, that looks like a real German child?' and my mother would say, 'It is a German child, and yet it is not a German child'."

The creature reeled about in paroxysms of laughter, and the Abbot said, "If you do not hurry you will miss the motor bus." "Yes, yes," the little creature cried, "I must not do that, for I receive all the distinguished visitors who come to Dechani. I speak to them my mother-tongue, the beautiful German. This afternoon I must receive an Italian general, and his wife who is a princess; to-morrow morning I must receive a professor who is at the head of the greatest university in France. They will have to be shown round by me, for the other monks do not know German, it is only I who speak German." "The motor bus," said the Abbot. "Oh, isn't it a shame that I must go! Well, good-bye, good-bye, good-bye!" He ran away from us with tiny twinkling steps, smiling at us over his shoulder and undulating his outstretched arm, like an old-fashioned fairy queen quitting the stage of a pantomime.

The Abbot took off his tall hat, blew into it, replaced it, and evidently felt much better. It was an odd gesture, but we all knew what he was feeling and sympathised. He had suffered acutely from this bizarre interlude, because, as we were to find out later on, he was primarily a country gentleman. That was why he had been made the abbot here. It was his duty to restore the estate of the Patriarchate to order and productivity, so that the Christians of Petch might see how their God wished them to live in fair weather, when martyrdom was no longer required from them. In this he was succeeding admirably, for the monastery had that look of agrarian piety to be seen in many French and some English farms and market gardens. I do not think that the frescos meant very much to him, but he spoke with great pleasure of the two visits that Bernard Berenson and Gabriel Millet had made for the purpose of examining them. He had his full measure of the countryman's feeling for craftsmanship, and he could see that these people knew their jobs. Also, he explained with enthusiasm that he had derived great enjoyment from the handsomeness of Mr. Berenson and his personal exquisiteness. "He is like a prince!" he said; "with his white hair, and his fine hands, and his slender body, and all

his clothes so neat and clean, he is like someone from a great court. I hope that there are many pictures of him all over England and America."

He took us up to his parlour, which was sweet and clean, and we drank good coffee and ate crystalline spoonfuls of quince jam, while he talked of his work and the place. Yes, it was beautiful, though in winter the winds came down the gorge from Montenegro very bitterly, and there was a great deal of snow. The land was very good, though this monastery was far from being rich like Dechani, and he found the people who worked for it very pleasant indeed, particularly the Albanians. We noted again the liking that most Serbs now feel for the Albanians, who during the Turkish occupation were their most constant tormentors. His congregations, he went on to say, were very good and pious, and came many miles to the services. Yet the Abbot's large handsomeness, which should have been as placid as cream, was dimmed by a cloud of perplexity and exasperation immediately he had given us an assurance of his satisfaction with the district. His dark brows drew together under his clear fleshy forehead, and his eyes, luminous as a peat stream, seemed to see something not very far off and not entirely gratifying, perhaps the main street of Petch as it would appear to eyes for whom nothing in it had the charm of unfamiliarity, a track, too wide for any traffic that could conceivably pass this way, with telegraph posts marching along it in full futility, bringing no useful messages to the town.

We should have gone to Dechani that afternoon, but at lunch it was plain that Constantine's fever had come back to him, so he telephoned to the Abbot and arranged that we should go the next morning instead. We sent Constantine to bed and tried to sleep a little ourselves, for we were both deadly tired. But I found it difficult to rest, because whenever my mind was not preoccupied by some new sight it was invaded by the recollection of some of the tremendous events which had been shown or explained to me during the last two months: the struggle of the Croat soul between its Slav self and its Western education, the outlawry of the Dalmatian Uskoks, the martyrdoms of Franz Ferdinand and Sophie Chotek and Princip and Chabrinovitch, the conflict between the Obrenovitches and the Karageorgevitches, the magical practices of Mace-

donian Christianity, the rites of St. George's Eve, the glory of Grachanitsa and the self-slaughter of Kossovo, the noble effort of Trepcha, and the nihilism of Gerda, with its demand that all these efforts of the human spirit should be set aside and that all the forces of the universe should be directed to the purpose of cramming her with whatever material belonged to others. When at last I slept a dream distressed me by its proof that the thing which stung Constantine's hand was his wife. She did not want him to write any more poetry, because he was a Jew like Heine.

My husband was awakened by the scamper of mice among our shoes, so we gave up and went for a walk on the hills overlooking the Patriarchate on the other side of the river, among budding woods and through meadows tangled with pale-purple and blue flowers. We met a good-looking young man who was stripped to the waist and carried a bright-blue shirt and wet bathing dress. He looked at us very hard and then turned back, and asked if he might walk with us and show us one of the hermits' caves which are so numerous in this district that they gave the town its name ; for Petch is an old word for cave. He spoke a didactic kind of English which he said he had learned in America as a child, during a visit to an uncle, but which had the hollow ring of the propagandist printed word. " You may wonder why I approached you when my torso is nude," he said, " but I did so in full confidence for I am sure that you are people who have swept all unwholesome prejudices out of your minds, and are open-minded and receptive to such healthful ideas as sun-bathing." " How did you know that ? " asked my husband. " I watched you last night as you had dinner outside the hotel," answered the young man, " and I am sure of it." " But what did we do as we dined that convinced you we're in favour of sun-bathing ? " pursued my husband. " You are very polite to your wife," said the young man ; " it is evident that you have conquered your animal instinct to oppress the female and have accepted intellectually and emotionally the point of view that by child-bearing she contributes as much to the State as the male by his characteristic activities. You talk together very intently also, so it is evident that you have raised her to your intellectual level. Yesterday I went back to my house and made my wife come out and look at you as an example, for she is of these parts, and she is not



always sure that she ought to be advanced. She is dragged down by her early surroundings. But she is very beautiful and very good, and there is something special about her which would be difficult to describe. But besides your attitude to each other, you have the appearance of cultured people. I am sure you read many books. What sort of books do you prefer and why ? ”

Towards such people who ask such questions my husband feels as a shepherd towards lambs. He does not ask himself whether he would not rather be thinking his own thoughts or spending the time with companions more like himself, he wholly abandons himself to the feeling that there is a breed valuable to the community and that he must cherish every member of it. He talked with the boy about books as we strolled along the hillside under green firwoods so high that the spring had only lately reached them, through the flowery pastures, past a ruined house where snakes slid among rank hemlocks and hellebores, to the visibly icy reservoirs where the boy had been bathing, and up a grassy slope to the cavern. It still glowed faintly with holy pictures painted by a medieval hermit, and it resounded with cries that might have been thought to proceed from a spirit in travail, had not the angular behind and bell-rope tail of some form of cattle been visible in its depths. On the grass near by, in the shadow cast by an acacia tree, sat an old Albanian, his bright eyes and smile fresh as a bubbling spring. We felt that he would have been sure to pick the best place for a rest, so we sat ourselves down beside him.

The young man exchanged jokes with him ; and one was so funny that the young man rolled over and over on the ground, but he remembered to pick himself up and say, in a superior manner, “ The Albanians are a people of great mother-wit, but they are not at all advanced,” and started talking about books again. His special interests were economics and political theory, and he called himself a Communist, but he had in fact a far more intelligent interest in Marxism than most Yugoslavs who claim that name. They are for the most part simply exponents of the age-long opposition between the country and the towns and have much more sympathy with William Morris than with Marx, but this young man had read *Das Kapital* with a mind of good tough critical fibre. My husband repeated to him some of the most amusing passages out of H. W. B. Joseph's book on the Marxian Theory of Value, and in spite of his faith he laughed

aloud and rolled over on his back just as he had done at the Albanian's jokes. "Who is the man that wrote that book?" he asked. "He must have a wonderful mind, though of course essentially frivolous. Do you know him?" "He has one of the finest minds in the world," said my husband, "and he was my philosophy tutor at Oxford." "Oh, what I could do," cried the boy, "if I had the advantages you have had!" He sat up and held his chin in his hands and looked sulkily down the valley, and then a light stirred in his eyes and he turned to my husband. "I heard them say in the town that you came from Kossovska Mitrovitsa and that you were great friends with the people at the Trepcha mines. Could you not give me a letter to the Gospodin Mac asking him to give me work? For there is nothing here for me to do. I help my father in the hotel he keeps, but there is not enough work for the two of us, and I am too good for the work there is, I could do much better. Sometimes I weep, because Petch has nothing for me to do."

On our way down to dinner we went into Constantine's room to see how he was faring with his fever, and on the landing we saw that the chambermaid was ironing her pile of sheets as she had been doing the night before, but this time she was quietly weeping. I said to Constantine, "Your little admirer is crying her eyes out, have you been cruel to her?" He answered, "No, she has told me what grieves her and it is something more important than me. She came in here to bring me an orangeade and she sat on my bed and she said, 'I should be happy, for they pay me well here. They know well that the hotel is falling to pieces and that if I were not here to scrub the floors and keep the mattresses clean we would be overrun with mice and beetles and bugs. But sometimes I cannot bear life.' I said to her, 'What is it you cannot bear, my little one?' and she answered, 'It is death. It makes me so angry. Three days ago a man died here, he was a very rich man and he held high office in the town. When the Prime Minister came here he was among those who received him, and he wore a tall hat such as the gentlemen wear in Budapest. I knew him well, and he was a proud and powerful man, with many things passing through his head. And three days ago he died, and yesterday they carried his coffin through the streets, and he was nothing, just a body that would soon begin to stink and would be just dirt, just filth!' And then she began to cry, so I said, 'Did you love

him, my little one ? ' and she answered, ' No, not at all, but it makes me so angry that death can do such a thing, that one day there can be a man, full of importance, and the next day there is nothing. It should not be so. Oh, I felt so furious, I wanted to fight death and kill him.' And she sat there and wept, and I think she was speaking the truth. I think she had not loved this man but was only enraged at the idea of death, for she wept like a woman who has been insulted, not like a woman who has been hurt. Then she said, ' I must iron my sheets,' and she beat my pillow, and she went from me." When we went out on to the landing she had left her task for a moment, and a guttering candle, standing on the rucked ironing-blanket between a pile of rough sheets and smooth ones, cast tremendous shadows on the walls and ceiling as we passed.

As we sat down in the restaurant there came to our table the traveller in ready-made clothing we had seen praying on the road near Kossovska Mitrovitsa, who was so civil that we asked him to dine with us. He accepted our invitation with alacrity because he longed to speak of the abode of joy, a blend of Venice in Carnival time and the New Jerusalem, to which his memory had transformed Aberdeen. But there was some other alchemic agent beside his memory ; there were personalities at work which had softened the gaunt handsomeness of that town and injected blandness into the veins of my maternal country to mix with its grim vigour. For he spoke of many people he had met in Great Britain with tenderness, particularly of one woman whom he proved by his story to be remarkable. She had organised the scheme for placing the Serbian refugee boys in English and Scottish homes and schools and had travelled perpetually to see how they were getting on ; and later she had astonished them by her interest in them as individuals. " She was like a baba, like a grandmother," he said, " but many people are fond of children, and young people, it is like being fond of dogs or horses. It is what happens afterwards that matters. And do you know, last year, she came out here. She said she was getting very old and might die before long, and she wanted to see what had happened to her boys. So she travelled all over the country seeking us out, and when we had done well she was so pleased. She came to my house and had tea with my wife and saw my children, and she sat and nodded her head and said, ' This is very good, this

is very good indeed. It couldn't be better. I shall often think about this when I get home.' She had really liked us boys, for ourselves, not because we were boys. That I think very nice." And indeed we thought it a Paradisal action, full of promise that earth need not always be what it is.

"I shall always be glad that I was in England," he went on, "for I learned to do things neatly and in order and at a definite time, which we do not do here, and this has made me successful in business. Not very successful, I am not an eagle ; but I have all I want and much more than I expected as a child, and I can keep my wife well and give her a nice home, and my children are strong and well educated. But I am glad I came back to Yugoslavia, for it is a most beautiful country." He asked us if we had visited many of the monasteries, and was sorry that we had not visited more in Serbia proper, in the valleys south of Belgrade, but glad that we had seen Sveti Naum and the Frushka Gora. "How do you know the monasteries so well?" asked my husband. "You cannot take much time off to look at them while you are travelling in your business." "Then I have no time at all," he replied. "but I belong to a society in Belgrade, and every time there is a holiday such as Easter or Whitsuntide we members hire motor charabancs and we drive off with our wives and children to some monastery and stay there two or three days. It is an excellent way of spending a holiday, for it keeps us close to the Church, even when we do not like what the Patriarchs do, and forget to go to services in Belgrade, and it reminds us of our national history, and the places are always exceedingly beautiful, and there are many good monks whom it is pleasant to meet." I tried to imagine Canterbury or Gloucester invaded by a Bank Holiday crowd, who picnicked all over the Close and sang and danced and drank, and occasionally rushed into the cathedral and joined heartily in the service and rushed out when they felt like it, and freely and familiarly conversed with the Dean and Chapter. The imagination cannot contrive such a picture. The Anglican Church has bought decorum at such a great price that it is indelicate to imagine her deprived of her purchase. "I am glad," continued our friend, "that you are to see Dechani. It is one of the most beautiful of monasteries. My friends and I spent last Easter there and we were amazed by its richness. It gives some idea of what our land must have

been like in the days of the Nemanyas." "Has Dechani much influence on this town?" I asked. "It does not seem so," answered the traveller; "this is a miserable town, not because the people here are not good, for the Serbs of Petch have always been remarkable for character and intelligence, but because nothing ever happens here. They say that dinars amounting to two or three thousand pounds a month are paid into the town as war pensions and gratuities, and the people live chiefly on that. It is a subsidy of a little over two pounds a year per head. You see, under the Turks it was a frontier town, and that meant a lot of money, both in the employment of troops, and in selling the troops goods and in smuggling; and the people had a great interest in maintaining their faith against persecution. But now they need a new thing."

He excused himself early, for he had to start driving south the next morning shortly after dawn; but he did not go till he had performed a service for us in the way of some supplies from a chemist. He was an altogether admirable person, but his place was almost at once taken by a person whom we found less admirable, the Dane who spoke German like a German. "Good evening," he said. "I suppose you will be going to Tsetinye to-morrow?" "No," said my husband. "But what are you doing here so long?" demanded the Dane. "We are tourists," said my husband. "But there is nothing here to keep a tourist longer than one day!" exclaimed the Dane in a tone of exasperation. "We have not yet seen Dechani," said my husband. "But you should have seen Dechani in the morning, and the Patriarchate in the afternoon!" the Dane said in a very loud and threatening voice. "What are you doing here in Petch?" asked my husband. The Dane clearly thought this an impertinent question. "I am a traveller in agricultural machinery," he answered coldly, as if to tell us to mind our own business. "I suppose you will be here for weeks," said my husband. "Why do you say weeks?" asked the Dane. "Well, would you rather I said days, months or years?" replied my husband. In open ill-humour the Dane went back to his own table and studied a German newspaper.

*Petch II*

The next morning we spoke of this suspicious person to Constantine, as we breakfasted outside the hotel. "Certainly he will be a German agent," he said. "That is the second we have come across, for I am sure the little one in knickerbockers at Sveti Naum was a German agent also. But I cannot think what can be to happen here, for this is not an important place. In Macedonia the Germans make much trouble with the Bulgarians, and it is worth their while, but here there are only Albanians, and it is worth nobody's while to stir them up." The day was hotter and there had been no rain for days; a wind came down from the wall of rock at the end of the gorge, stabbed us with unexpected chill, and blew into our teeth, into our eyes, a film of warm dust from the high-street. The slight discomfort aroused in Constantine his chronic malaise, and he turned to us with a gorgon smile. "Yes, the Germans are terrible people," he sneered, "they employ secret agents to serve their interests abroad. I suppose the English never did so, not in Russia, not in India." "Of course we use secret agents like every other power," said my husband, "and sometimes we use them justifiably and sometimes unjustifiably, which again can be said of any other power. What is interesting us is not the fact that this man is a secret agent, but that he practises his art with so little discretion that we have only to describe his proceedings for you to be quite sure that he is a secret agent." "Yes," squealed Constantine, clenching his fists, "the English are always cold and dignified and they are never ridiculous, and the Germans are clowns and make fools of themselves, but there is a mystery there, and what is behind it may not mean that the English are saved and the Germans damned." His voice sounded charlatanish and bewildered; he was using the spiritual vocabulary of the Slav who is pre-occupied with the ideas of failure and humiliation, to justify his allegiance to Gerda, who had no sympathy with them and would have regarded his interest in them as proof of his Slav inferiority, and as he spoke his taste exposed to him his own falsity, though he persisted in it.

But once we had started on our way to Dechani Constantine became himself again, for the road was beautiful. I have said

that Petch stands where a wall of mountains running from the north just fails to meet a wall of mountains running from the south. The road from Kossovska Mitrovitsa to Petch lies under the mountains that come from the north ; the road from Petch to Dechani lies under the mountains that come from the south, and passes country that is better watered and shadowed, and is therefore green with a fertility that seems to well up from deep wet roots. Forests are thick on the hillside, tall trees hold up handsome densities of foliage, and on the left of the road stretches the plain we had seen on our way from Kossovska Mitrovitsa, that is rich and damp as the Vale of Pewsey. In its fat fields parties of labourers worked in close-set teams, looking like a *corps de ballet* in their white pleated skirts, and in the villages women stately as the queens in their frescoes gossiped round the fountains. But the houses we passed told an appalling story. The narrow windows were set high, so that they could be shot from and not into, and the walls were pock-marked with bullets. I remembered having read that on this road there stand two houses, side by side, which in 1909 were the subject of an imbecile tragedy. In that year a man living in one slew four men of the family living in the other. He had to flee. That is natural enough. What was not natural, what was as artificial a constriction of human nature as any abuse of Western civilisation, was that thirteen other men belonging to his family who had nothing whatsoever to do with the crime, were obliged to flee. Had they not done so, the institution of the blood-feud, which flourished unchecked under Turkish rule, would have involved them in a welter of butchery, in which all must have acquired the guilt of murder and would themselves have been murdered. In 1919, under Yugoslavian rule, the criminal was arrested, and his innocent relatives, with the consent of the inhabitants of the other house, who were equally anxious to be relieved from the blood-feud, were able to return home.

Order is something. I thought so again when we passed through a grove of trees which the Turks, in their great love for any beauty that did not involve careful maintenance, had chosen for a graveyard. It must have been at this grove that the down-trodden monks of Dechani had waited when Miss Muir Mackenzie and Miss Irby came to visit them on their way from the Patriarchate, more than seventy years ago, that they might beg the ladies not to bring their Turkish

military guard to the monastery, as they were worn out with defending their treasures and the sanctity of their altar. Miss Mackenzie and Miss Irby had had to act with great decisiveness, even scribbling notes to demonstrate their command over the magical art of writing, before they could rid themselves of the soldiers, who had evidently promised themselves great sport at the monastery. Now the grove was empty save for an Albanian shepherd-boy, pretty as a girl, who sat playing on a pipe, while his flock nibbled among the tree-trunks and the marble stumps of the tombs, dappled like them with sunshine and shadow.

We were at Dechani. Across a wide neatness of farmland we looked into a glen of the Highland sort, with a background of mountain falling back from mountain to show snow peaks that must have been many miles distant, far beyond the Albanian frontier. The nearer hills were emerald on their lower slopes and above that shrill green, where there were beeches and limes; and where there were pines they were feathered with blackness. At the mouth of the glen was the white oblong of the monastery. It was larger than any other we had seen, and even from this distance it could be seen that it was a rarity, a jewel. As we drew nearer to it down a by-road we could see that it could never be spoiled, and also that it was as near to being spoiled at this moment as it could ever be. For it was covered with scaffolding and surrounded with the potent and infective disorder that builders, by a malign kind of compensation, diffuse round what they repair. But when we had crossed the ramp of planks that was now the only entrance to the monastery, and picked our way among the trenches and heaps of rubble in the courtyard, it was fully apparent that what we had come to see was a pearl of architecture. It has the unity of a pearl, its living texture, and even its tint, for it is built of blocks of white, grey and rose marble, which merge in the eye to a soft pale glow.

It happens, however, that I have no great taste for pearls; and I did not like Dechani. It represents an inspired moment in that phase of Christian architecture when Armenian influence fused with the Byzantine and Lombard schools; and many French churches demonstrate what virtue can be in that conjunction. But with the religious tolerance characteristic of the Nemanyas Stephen Dechanski had employed a Roman Catholic



architect, a Franciscan friar, to build this, his chief, and, indeed his only remarkable foundation; and this contact with the Western Church has introjected an element into Dechani which strikes an eye accustomed, as mine was by this time, to the Byzantine standard, as soft and impure. In the Roman Catholic faith it often appears that the partitions between the different kinds of human activity have been broken down, and that the worshippers often bring to religion desires which could be properly satisfied only in the sphere of sex or by the exercise of power or the enjoyment of respect. Hence the Church may often, through its art or ritual or dogma, speak of voluptuousness or pomp or respectability; and it seemed to me that Dechani spoke of all three. Grachanitsa was built for people who never thought of sex when they came to church, since they had already judged its claims in relation to society and had settled them, who had been assigned their places in the social structure and had play for their powers within those limits, and who knew that if they were to earn the respect of their fellows they must be good soldiers or scholars or craftsmen. But Dechani might have been built for people who were repressed and sentimentally lecherous, who were acquiring a nihilist standard of ability and a negative standard of virtue because an honoured place in the community could be bought simply by the continued possession of material goods. It is exquisite, but it is unaustere and complacent.

At this moment, in any case, it was hard to give it its due of admiration, although its perfection could not be disguised by the scaffolding. The trenches and rubble-heaps among which we walked had a look of more than necessary disorder, as if nobody had tried to mitigate it out of pride in the place; and there had come to stare at us several young monks, students in the theological college, who were as unkempt as they were uncouth. Their clothes were dirty and neglected. The cassock of one had no buttons at the chest, and the gap showed an equally buttonless shirt, from which there projected a bunch of matted and lustreless hair. Nobody can blame a monk if the intensity of his religious life leaves him no attention to spare for his body. But the lax faces of these young men which were spongy with boredom, showed that their untidiness was due to no such preoccupation. Simply they had been removed from the discipline of their peasant homes and no other dis-

cipline had been imposed on them. But they were silent as they dragged after us, and we were getting on with our inspection of the outside of the church, until there suddenly ran out on us from behind a corner the golden-haired little monk we had seen at the Patriarchate the day before.

"Do you remember meeting me yesterday?" he cried, clapping his hands and making movements which, though contracted and not particularly agile, nevertheless indicated a feeling for ballet-dancing. "I am the monk whom you thought must be a German because I am so fair, and I told you that I am a German and not a German! Well, here I am. I told you that I receive all visitors because I alone know German, the other monks know none." He kept on talking in the same strain of racial and personal coquetry, while we irritably tried to go on looking at the church, until an older monk, a man of dignity and fine manners, came out and wearily rebuked him. He had, it seemed, been sent out to bid us to come at once to lunch, since the Abbot had to start on a journey early in the afternoon and could not wait. The golden-haired monk said immediately, "That is what I have been trying to tell them, but none of them understands German very well." We went into the monastery buildings which formed three sides of the courtyard, and were taken to a dining-room where the Abbot, a middle-aged man with black hair and a multivermiform beard of tight, black corkscrew curls, sat at a table with four or five monks. He greeted us in fluent but not very good French, and proposed the health of our English King in a glass of rakia. When we had swallowed it and my husband had made a short and suitable speech, he proposed the health of our Queen; and before the meal began we had to toast most of the Royal Family. Fortunately, he had not yet learned of the existence of Princess Margaret Rose.

The occasion was not without liveliness. The Abbot was far from unintelligent; as well as his fair French he spoke Russian, Greek and Turkish, and he talked with some vivacity. All the monks, except for one of Oriental appearance, across whose yellow face there passed no shade of expression, hung on his words and sometimes threw in laughing remarks. These last phrases would have been used if this had been a meal in a girls' boarding-school, but they are not therefore inappropriate. This establishment might easily have been named St. Hilda's

or St. Winifred's. The most talkative monk, who was plump and dark and intense in manner, closely resembled many an art mistress. In spite of this light-hearted and quite innocent atmosphere the meal was not altogether agreeable. It was served on a cloth filthier than I have ever seen in any Balkan inn, and it was gross in quantity and quality. Since it was Friday this was a fast; and for that reason we were given barley soup, a stew of butter beans, a purée of potatoes with onion sauce, a very greasy stew of sardines and spinach, and a mess of rice cooked with fried potatoes. Of each dish we were given enough for a whole meal, and each was cooked without skill. The wild disregard of this menu for the digestive weaknesses of mankind reminded me of St. Augustine's monastic friends, mentioned in *The City of God*, who were able to produce an effect of singing by unusual means.

But there was here a lack of perception about other things than food. The Abbot politely mentioned Miss Muir Mackenzie and Miss Irby and their account of their visit to Dechani, and we tried to return the courtesy by speaking of other foreigners who had come to the monastery in the last few years. Constantine had sent many on their way from Belgrade, and I too knew several. We found that not one had made the slightest impression on the Abbot. He did not remember a single one of them. Nothing about any of them, no matter of what nationality or rank or profession, had excited his interest. He had forgotten the British Minister, a distinguished French diplomat who is also a man of letters, an American scholar, and an Italian philosopher, both eminent. At first we thought that these people had visited the convent before he had assumed office, but on examination of the dates we found it was not so. It may be objected that there was no reason why the head of a great religious institution should be interested in casual foreign tourists, but one of the personalities he had ignored was a Dutch artist who was also a mystic and a devout member of the Eastern Church.

The truth was, we discovered as the meal went on, that nothing in the West had any meaning for him; and, by an unfortunate historical accident, nothing had any meaning anywhere else either. His face was turned, as his repertory of languages suggested, towards the East, which was natural enough in an Orthodox priest who had taken orders before the

Balkan wars, when his home was Turkish territory and the ally who promised to alter this was Tsarist Russia, and the new Turkey had no desire to be seen by him. He was therefore left isolated in a provinciality that would have been tolerable only if it had been transformed by spiritual genius. But of that there was no trace whatsoever. He spoke of the plot which Stoyadinovitch had made to placate Italy and the Croatian priests by a Concordat which gave the Roman Catholic Church an unfair advantage over the Orthodox Church; and he used just such words as might have come to any politician, untempered by charity or resignation. He spoke of the Montenegrins who worked on the monastery farmlands and lived in the neighbourhood with an unrestrained hostility very different from the discretion usually observed by priests in this country laid waste by racial enmities. There was no attempt in anything he said to improve upon the natural man or his natural state; and the effect was of a chattering lethargy, fatiguing to the ear, alarming to the heart.

"It is very interesting," said Constantine; "the man with the yellow face who is so silent and does not laugh, he is the son of a Turk and a Serbian woman. His mother seemed very happy with his father, and she grieved very much when he died, and then she and her son lived very happily. But when she came to die she had a long illness and often did not know what she spoke, and then he found out that it had always been a horrible grief to her that he and his father had not been Christians, so he promised her that he would become a monk, and she died happy." There was no difficulty in understanding why he did not laugh. It would be a mystery past comprehending why one's best-beloved should have known no peace till she had condemned one to sit in this little room, listening to littleness.

But the church remained, and we went back to it as soon as the Abbot left. Its interior was far more beautiful than the exterior, for here the Serbian genius had not commissioned an alien to make it a masterpiece but had worked according to its own nature. Though the church had been built by Stephen Dechanski, it was given its frescoes and its furnishings by his son Stephen Dushan; and these bore further witness to the resemblance between his reign and the Elizabethan age. In each there was a coincidence between national expansion and a

flowering of creative art. The flesh and the spirit waxed in a common beauty. There were several royal portraits, radiant with a Tudor positiveness, notably one of Stephen Dushan himself, which showed a tall, hale man of whom it could well be believed that, as his chroniclers tell, he was sometimes shaken by tremendous laughter. It is easy to imagine that his people thought of him as Elizabethans thought of Elizabeth, as a fountain of plenty, irrigating his land with richness. The astonishing degree of that plenty, the quality of that richness, was by an odd paradox supremely illustrated by a fresco depicting a martyrdom. An executioner waits ready to decapitate St. Barbara, his feet in dancing stance, his long fingers trying his sword edge. On his head is a high yellow hat, not lower than a couple of feet; his mantle is rose, his tunic green. His victim bows before him, a rose-and-gold mantle swathing her blue robe. She too has assumed a dancing stance, for they are performing the well-known dance and counter-dance of sadist and masochist. This fresco proceeds from an intense experience of luxury. The painter has seen many kinds of textiles dipped in many dyes; he formed part of a society which treated even its most sinister functionaries honourably, so sure was it of its own honour; his kind had outstripped necessity and had therefore full leisure to examine their uncomprehended hearts.

But I could not look at these frescoes as I wished, for there was running and jumping around me the little golden-haired monk, who was talking insistently and, as time went on, impertinently and angrily. As soon as we had come in, Constantine, who was genuinely impassioned for the history and historical monuments of Serbia, had taken us to see the coffin lying on the marble tomb before the iconostasis which holds the masked and silk-shrouded body of Stephen Dechanski, and the other relics of the church, but now the tiresome little creature wanted to show them to me all over again. I looked round for Constantine and my husband, but they were out of sight. When I started to look for them the little creature ran in front of me, so I decided to wait where I was till they returned. I had therefore to look for a second time at the giant candle which was given to the monastery by the widow of the Tsar Lazar who was killed at Kossovo, with the direction that it should be lit only when that defeat was avenged, and which was duly lit by King Peter Karageorgevitch in 1913. But my eyes ranged round me

to such wonders as an astonishing fresco which showed the martyred St. George, a beautiful creature bearing the signs of all mundane distinction who neither moves nor speaks because he is the victim of a murderous death, and two bishops and a Fury-like angel, who lean over and, by a miraculous power impersonal and unloving as the force of a magnet, raise him back to life. "You are not listening!" cried the little creature. "Why will you not listen to me?" "I am listening," I said.

But he knew I was not. He had been telling me a story about his brother, which apparently made some claim on my sympathies, and had I been listening I would have been sure to make certain responses. "I am afraid I do not understand German," I pleaded. "You understand it well enough," he replied, "it is simply that you are not attending; I will say it all over again." I saw my husband come back into the church and I walked towards him, clapping my hands over my ears, mocked as I went by glimpses of magnificence, here a superb group of lions fighting with sphinxes, there an Annunciation that annihilates time by showing a roof-tree throw the shadow of a cross between the Virgin and the angel, which I should not see again perhaps for years and could not look at under these conditions. When I reached my husband I forgot why I had come to him, for my eyes followed his to the chandelier above us, which was one of the glorious kind to be found in all Byzantine churches from the beginning. There is one in St. Sophia, and in every church on Mount Athos. Chains drop from the drum of the central dome and support a horizontal ring of metal links, closely set with candles and ornamented with icons. These links are very loosely joined, for at a certain point in the great nocturnal services the chandelier is set slowly swinging, and this covers the whole church with a shifting pattern of light and shadow, which is regarded as a symbol of the dance of the angels and saints before the heavenly throne. "What sound, sober work, what sound, sober taste!" sighed my husband. The golden-haired monk pressed in on us, scolding and complaining, and I cried out, "What can we do to get rid of him?" My husband said to him severely, in German, "What is all this yammering about?" The little creature fell silent, looked down at his slippers, and cried out, "Oh, dear, I must go and put on my goloshes!" As we watched him run away, my husband said, "Here is Constantine, I must

ask him to stop this." But as Constantine came towards us he pointed over his shoulder, and again we forgot our irritation, this time out of interest in the party which one of the older monks was leading into the church.

There were two men, three women, one holding a baby in a wicker cradle, and two little boys. They were Albanian Moslems. The men wore the white skull-caps that are to them as the fez to other Moslems, and their characteristic white serge trousers, braided with black about the loins and ankles, and clinging miraculously to the hip-bone. The little boys wore tiny skull-caps, tiny braided trousers. The women were veiled and wore floppy white dresses that fell in deep, limp frills like old-fashioned lampshades. In the tall multi-coloured square of painted walls, among the shafts of yellow light that drove down from the high windows, they looked pale and dusty like moths. The priest spoke to the men and they took off their white skull-caps and saw to it that the boys did likewise. He spoke to the women and they took off the veils slowly and clumsily, perhaps because they were reluctant to break a lifelong pious custom, but also for the reason that one strand of Islamic custom (though not all) seems to insist on lack of fleetness and grace as part of the feminine ideal. But their faces bore the slight lubricious smile of those who perform a forbidden action, and this expression seemed particularly ghastly and frivolous because one of the women revealed the livid skin and preoccupied stare of the typical cancer patient. "It is their Friday," whispered Constantine, "that is the Moslem's holy day, it is to them as Sunday is to us. And they bring their sick to be cured by our Christian saints. See what they do." They made their way to the tomb of Stephen Dechanski and stood there in a hushed fluttered group, summoning up their intention.

The priest withdrew from them and came over to us, murmuring with a smile, "They have worked out this ritual themselves; it is entirely their own idea, we have nothing to do with it." First the cradle was set down on the floor and the child taken out of it; its cry expressed the accumulated griefs and the final weakness of a nonagenarian; its mother pressed its face against the coffin-lid and then knelt down beside the tomb while one of the men knelt at the end. Trembling, she held the wailing baby under the tomb and the man

took it from her and passed it round the end back to her. Three times the baby was passed under the tomb and back again. By this tenuous contact with the man whose father had burnt out his eyes, who had killed his brother and who had been killed by his son, it was presumed that the baby would now enjoy physical health. Then it was put back in its cradle, and one of the little boys kissed the tomb and crawled under it three times. After that the woman with the livid skin and the stare slowly performed the ritual, so stiffly and mechanically that it was as if her own malady were hypnotising her from within. The third time she could not pass under the tomb by her own volition. She had to be dragged out by the two men. Even if the ritual were effective she had come too late ; it was no longer for her to say if she would dispense with her malady or not, it was now for her malady to decide when it would dispense with her. The two men got her on to her feet, and they became again a huddled, over-awed group. Softly they padded across the church towards the porch. One of the women and two of the men looked up at the frescoes with the conscious calm of tourists who in a tropical island see the natives practising what in their country of origin would be considered indecent exposure : Islam forbids the representation of living creatures. We followed them to the archway and watched them in the sunshine among the trenches and the rubble-heaps, reassuming their veils and their skull-caps.

At Sveti Naum they had told me that the Moslems brought them their lunatics to be cured, but I had never seen it for myself. Of course this was not an actual flouting of the theory of Islam. We remember only that Mohammed bade his followers strike off the heads of all misbelievers ; we forget that in the Koran he alluded to Christ with deep respect, and held that Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ and himself were God's best-beloved. These Moslems had been brought here by several motives. First, and most piteous, they had already cried to their own God and found him indifferent. Also this was a place of great past and present prestige. Before Dechani was a monastery it was a palace of the Nemanyas ; though most of this was destroyed by the Turks after Kossovo an indestructibly solid kitchen still survives. The memory of its grandeur would certainly have still lingered in this country where a century seems less than a decade elsewhere ;



and that the monks who a generation ago lived here in poverty and fear should now be among the rulers of the land, while the Sultan and his pashas had been driven out, must have given the ignorant a sense of phoenix-like resurgence, triumphant over death. But whatever the motives of the people were, the visit itself made a painful impression, because they were getting so little good from it. This crawling under Stephen Dechanski's tomb was not a vicious ritual, but it was idiotic. It was a plain piece of infantilism, purely regressive. The human being pretended it was a child again by going down on its hands and knees, and by crawling under a symbol of authority enacted a fantasy of flight from responsibility, of return to dependence. That was all these people got from a visit to this church which on its walls bore such strong and subtle evidence of the support that Christianity can give to the tortured human animal. On the dome, and again behind the altar, was Christ Pantocrator, the Ruler of All: that magnificent conception of man which shows him worn with care, utterly defeated by necessity, utterly triumphant because he continues to exist under the defeat and exercise his will. On the wall the Mother of God holds up her thin and loving hands in prayer; the folds of her gown are cut from the very stuff of religion, for in their long fall they make an image of endurance, continuance. She too is utterly defeated, she too is utterly triumphant in her refusal to abandon under that defeat her preference for love. People who grasped those conceptions would for ever know some measure of comfort. I think that they, as well as Aberdeen, accounted for the peculiar sweetness and serenity of our friend the seller of ready-made clothing. But there seemed to be no force working in the life of the monastery which would make these conceptions clear to those who were not prepared for them by their own tradition. No one could have entered Sveti Naum, not the wildest mountain Moslem, without receiving some intimation of what its founders and those who lived under their influence had believed about life. But though there were several monks here at Dechani who looked as if they were wise and would have transmitted wisdom, they all wore an air of helplessness and frustration.

"I am taking your husband to look at some carving on the outer wall," said Constantine. "Will you come?" But I stayed where I was among the frescoes, which the afternoon

light was now irradiating and showing more and more manifestly superb as pure painting, quite apart from their revelation of the sensibility of a daemonic people. Suddenly the little golden-haired monk was back at my side. I had thought that he had said he was going away to put on his goloshes as a pretext for escaping from my husband, but he had actually changed into curious flapping footwear of blue cloth. I heard again Mrs. Mac's words, "I hope you'll not be shown round by that wee monk with the awful goloshes." Apparently such imbecile scenes were the usual lot of the visitors to Dechani. "You must give me your passport," he said. "But why?" I asked. "It is a rule," he said, "that everybody who comes to the monastery must give me his passport." "But we are not staying here," I objected. "We are going back to Petch quite soon, before evening." "That does not matter," said the little creature, "everybody who comes here, even for a few moments, must give me his passport." This was, of course, perfect nonsense. "Give it to me, give it to me," he clamoured. I knew well that if I handed it over to him I would never see it again. He would probably take it away, tear it up, and come back saying that he had never had it. "I am sorry," I said, "I haven't got it with me. We all left ours at the hotel at Petch." His face screwed up in anger. "But I know you have got it!" he insisted. "I saw it inside your bag when you took out your handkerchief! Give it to me at once!" I made a ridiculous flight out of the church, and since I could not see my husband and Constantine anywhere, began to run round it in search of them, jumping over the trenches and rubble-heaps. Round the first corner I found them talking to one of the older and more dignified monks. The little monk, who was scrambling and jabbering at my heels, came to a sudden halt, and scuttled away, crying over his shoulder, "I am looking for the Hungarian count I have to show round the monastery. I cannot think what has happened to him."

I said angrily, "It really is not fair to have this disgusting little pest running about this lovely place, preventing people from looking at it." Though I spoke English the monk had caught my meaning, and, looking distressed and embarrassed, he suggested that we go down to the stream which runs through the farmlands a short distance from the monastery and drink from a famous healing spring that rises on its bank. We followed

him down a steep path through an orchard, and met three Moslem women, coming up, leading a pack-horse. They asked breathlessly, their black veils shaking and twitching with their agitation, "May we go into the church?" and the monk answered, "Yes, but you must leave the horse outside." The stream ran shining in and out of the shadows cast by poplars and oaks, willows and acacias; like the quite distinct river which runs through Petch it is called the Clean One. From the bridge we looked on a far panorama of operatic picturesqueness, a nearer composition of water meadows and woodlands that was limpid and lovely as ideal flute-music. The only touches in the scene not exquisitely fresh were the filthy black coats of the young theological students who stood about and gaped at us.

As we sipped the spring water we found pleasure in watching some young Albanians who were kneeling between the willows on the river's brink and were bathing their faces and heads. It is a salient difference between the Serbs and Albanians that, whereas a Serb boy baby looks definitely and truculently male as soon as it is out of its mother's arms, the sex of many Albanians is not outwardly determined until they are in their late teens, and these boys, who were perhaps thirteen to seventeen, might have been so many Rosalinds. They had long lashes, bright lips, bloomy skins and a nymph-like fluency of movement. I said, "Why are they bathing their faces and heads like that? It is not so very hot." The monk answered, "It is a ceremony of purification which they have invented themselves. They like to come up to the church every Friday, and always they come here first and wash as you see them doing now. We never ask them to do it, they do it of their own accord. I suppose that they feel guilty, for they are not like the Turks, who have always been heathen. They were Christians when this monastery was built, in the fourteenth century, and I think they know they should be as they were then, and should come back to us." I thought to myself, "But the trouble is that you too are not as you were in the fourteenth century, and that there is not so much as there ought to be for them to come back to. This reconquered country is like a chalice waiting to be filled, and it seems to me that the wine is lacking."

At that moment an elbow was thrust into my side, and the little golden-haired monk forced himself between Constantine

and myself. He waved a disparaging hand at the landscape and cried, "I too have made sacrifices for my religion. For this have I left all the pleasures of city life. Hierfür hab' ich das schönste Stadtleben aufgegeben." Constantine turned on him with a shout of rage, and the other monk flung out an arm at him and told him to go away. Tossing his head defiantly, like a character in an old-fashioned book about schoolgirls, he scampered away and ran up the steep path through the orchard, sometimes pausing because he had lost one or other of his goloshes. The Albanian boys tilted up the lovely ovals of their faces towards the bridge, the unkempt students gathered closer and stared harder, while Constantine kept on shouting, "For a Croat, and a Schwab Croat at that, to speak so of one of our holiest Serbian places!" he ended, and the monk shrugged his shoulders wearily.

"Let us go away," I said, "let us go away at once." As we passed through the quadrangle the church was glowing more brightly than a pearl, like a lily in strong sunlight, in spite of all the scaffolding and hugger-mugger. "Do you want to go in again?" asked Constantine. "Not at all," I said. "I only want to walk for a little in the woods outside." When we had said good-bye to the monk and given him some money for the church, we went out to the road and found Dragutin standing beside the automobile with his arms folded, while the little golden-haired monk skipped round him. "Yes," he was crying, "and that is not the end of the famous folk who are proud to be our guests! For to-day we have had great news, we have heard that next Whitsuntide we will have the great honour of entertaining at Dechani Herr Hitler and General Goering!" "Drive us a short way down the road," said Constantine; "the Gospodja does not want to stay here any longer, she would rather walk in the woods." "I don't wonder," said Dragutin; "this isn't my idea of a holy place. If this little one had a dancing bear I'd think we were in the gipsy quarter."

We found a path through very still and fragrant pinewoods, leading to a holiday camp for children, not yet opened for the summer, and we sat down on one of the seats. Soon Constantine fell into a doze, and I went for a stroll among the trees, and came back with a handful of peppermint. My husband too was asleep now, and I sat down between the two men till they wakened. When Constantine opened his eyes he asked, "What

are those things on your lap ? I like those dark-green leaves, and those sad, middle-aged mauve flowers. Peppermint, you say ? But what have they to do with peppermint ? Do they smell like it ? " No," I said, " it is peppermint itself." " What are you telling me ! " he exclaimed. " I am like a little one who has thought all his life that babies came in the doctor's bag and is suddenly told the truth by a cruel schoolmaster. Always I have thought that peppermint came simply from a shop, or at furthest a jar in a shop, and now you tell me brutally that it grows out of the earth, in my own land, in woods such as I have seen all my life." I crushed a piece and held it under his nose. " Hey, it is truly peppermint," he cried ecstatically, for he loved pungent scents and flavours. But suddenly his expression changed from a grin of delight to a rictus of horror. He pushed my hand away and groaned. It was as if he suddenly rebelled against the intensity of sensation, as if he loathed the acute quality of experience. " I am very ill," he sighed. " I am in great pain. And there is nothing whatsoever the matter with me," he added, more faintly still.

My husband and I put our arms round him because we were afraid he would fall off the bench. He remained with his eyes closed for a moment, then said, " I am quite all right. It is the sting on my hand that has given me fever. That is all." " No," I said, " there is more than that the matter with you. You are very tired." I paused, at a loss for words. I did not know how to say that he was dying of being a Jew in a world where there were certain ideas to which some new star was lending a strange strength. But my husband said, " Dear Constantine, you know you are tired to death. Why do you not go straight away back to Belgrade and let us find our way over Montenegro to Kotor ? You think we are English and stupid, but not a dog could lose its way from here to Dubrovnik." " How bored you are with me," said Constantine. " I have seen that coming for a long time." " Dear Constantine, that is not true," I said. " We could not have had a more wonderful companion," said my husband. " Is it so ? " asked Constantine very earnestly. We patted his hand, but he looked away as if he found our reassurance not so interesting as he had expected. " I will come with you," he said. " Montenegro is a very interesting country and nobody can explain it to you so well as myself. Now, let us sit here and enjoy the calm. Breathe,

breathe deep ! This is the sweetest air, such as you have not in England."

When we returned to Petch Constantine went to bed at once, and we sat for a time drinking plum brandy outside the hotel, watching the Corso. "Our relations with Constantine are painful but very interesting," I said ; "it is as if we had ceased to be people, and had become figures in a poet's dream." "I cannot help feeling," said my husband, "that there are more restful ways of taking a holiday than becoming characters in the second part of *Faust*." Before us streamed the mountain people, large-boned and majestic, and always tragic when old ; the trim functionaries moving whippily, as if they were determined to dodge out of the path of destiny likely to work such a change on them between youth and age : lads ranged in groups yet loosely, like skeins of wool, as they do in the distressed areas of our own country ; grave and pallid little boys circled between the tables selling newspapers and picture postcards, gay little girls ran through the crowd in their enchanting costumes of flowered tight jackets and loose trousers.

Suddenly we were jerked out of our contented drowsiness. Two lads were talking at the edge of the stream that runs down the roadway ; they drew apart, one struck the other on the chest, not violently, but with an intention of insult ; before he had well delivered the blow its answer came to him. He was struck with a force that had at least thought of murder. His body pivoted on one heel and fell obliquely, with the arms windmilling, into the middle of the stream. As he scrambled out of the water a silence fell on the whole street. Not a shocked silence ; simply the silence of a circus audience watching the acrobats as they hang impaled on the climax of their great trick. Maybe many of the audience thought that the old days had come back when men were allowed to be men and have their excitements. But the silence was broken. A sword rattled. It had not been drawn, it had got caught in the legs of a chair. The Chief of Police had risen from his table in the café, with a look of extreme exasperation on his hard-bitten face, and was hurrying across the street to the two lads. He boxed the ears of the one who was standing on the edge of the stream ; the other he helped out of the water, and then cuffed him with just as little tenderness. Then he stood over them and scolded them in the very pose of a nursemaid. The

Corso shuffled on again, the newsboys once more shouted "Pravda!" and "Politika!" Doubtless many hearts were the heavier as they realised, as they must have done many times, that the old days were over.

We strolled along the main street, passing some bright caves in the dim simplicity of the low buildings, where the functionaries and their wives could buy Kolynos and Listerine, Coty powders and Lenthéric lip-sticks. At length we came to a point in the road which we had remarked on our way to the Patriarchate, where objects not in themselves remarkable, a disused mosque of no great architectural distinction, a square Turkish tower two or three hundred years old, a patch of grass and some trees, and a gravelled open space were set at angles which gave them a mysterious and exciting value. We stood for a while and enjoyed its challenge to the imagination. Twilight was falling. The brilliant sky was bluish and white, lit with stars that minute by minute grew more immense. The mountains were the colour and texture of lamp-black and the woods on the foothills looked liquid as green water. Beside the mosque a puddle lay pure white. We heard a drumming, throbbing sound, and thought that the mosque could not be disused as we were told, since surely this was the chanting of a service. But when we drew near the mosque the droning grew fainter, and bats flew straight out of the walls, and our search for the sound led us to round the open space to a little cottage with a garden where somebody was giving a party and entertaining his guests with very old records played on a very old gramophone. It must have been a very small party, for it was the smallest of cottages. I do not think there can have been more than two or three guests; but there were the solemn, self-consciously orgiastic noises of a Slav party.

As we looked and listened there was a scuffle behind us, and a tug at my coat. One of the little girls in flowered jacket and trousers was there behind me, panting through her laughter, "Parlez-vous français, madame?" The golden patina on her sun-bleached brown hair shone like a halo through the half-light. Softly shrieking with laughter, hampered and delayed by laughter, she fled back to a group of shadows that was hiding at a corner of the Turkish tower and now scattered, laughing as she had laughed, into the dusk. Though we called her she would not come; but it did not matter, for she had no more

need than a kingfisher to break her flight to prove her loveliness. The town seemed the quieter for this sudden unfolding and furling of wings in its stillness. We turned at random down a street, where white houses showed blank and secretive faces, and were defended by a broad stream that flowed between them and the roadway. We did not hear a human sound until we met a Turk, wearing a red-and-white turban of archaic fashion, and carrying two amphoras ; as he passed us his spectacles flashed at us but he went on talking contentiously to himself. I said to my husband, " Miss Kemp says in her book, *The Healing Ritual*, that she met a young man here who studied occultism and had in his home two hundred ancient manuscripts and books dealing with the art." " If one lived in Petch one would do queer things," said my husband ; " its dignified decay makes me feel like a fly walking over velvet."

At last we heard voices. On a bridge leading over the stream from a house stood a young girl in a white blouse and black skirt, holding a lantern with one hand while her other arm was laid about the shoulders of four young children as they all looked earnestly along the street. " They are coming ! " cried a little boy at the sight of us. " No, they are not ! " jeered the others. " These people are not they ! Do you not know them better than that ? " That broke the tensivity of the children's interest, and they ran back into the house, but the young girl continued to look down the street, even when a glance had told her that we had come to a stop in front of her, startled out of our good manners by her incomparable beauty. The slight change of expression by which she rebuked our impudence was neither excessive nor complaisant ; she was noble in her manners as well as her appearance. I thought it probable that she too was of the strain that had produced the great Katerina Simitch, or at least her followers, and I hoped that the visitors she awaited would bring her some food for her splendid appetites, some opportunity to coerce life into a superior phase by an act of courage. But, if they came on such an annunciatory errand, I could not think that they would belong to the same organisation that had fostered the genius of Katerina Simitch : I could not think that they would be sent out by the local church. The Abbot of the Patriarchate was performing his pious and non-mystical function to perfection ; when this girl was older his monastery would be a refuge and a refreshment



to her. But there was no force here to tell her youth, as the Church had told Katerina Simitch when she needed the lesson, how to take the Kingdom of Heaven by storm. I looked nervously over my shoulder lest I should see the only emissary of the faith that was likely to appear in this place at this hour, since he was likely to appear anywhere at any hour. I could well imagine him caponing and curveting down the twilight street, coquetting with his shadow, while his blond curls swung.

The starlight waxed stronger, and colour drained out of the world. The stream in its deep channel glittered like a black snake ; the houses were pale as chalk, as a ghost, as a skeleton. I might be wrong ; I would be able to check it when I got back to the high-street, where Petch was sitting down for its evening meal, for this was Friday, and a fast-day. When we got back to our hotel and sat down in the restaurant, I said to my husband, " Eat what you like, I want to make an experiment." I asked the waiter what I could eat, and he mentioned dish after dish containing meat or eggs or butter, or fish cooked in butter, or cheese or milk, and all these things are forbidden by the Orthodox Church on fast-days. " These will not do," I said ; " though I am a foreigner I want to keep the fast. Have you no dish that fulfils the condition ? Haven't you any beans, or fish fried in oil or boiled in water ? " " No," he said. " Is that because this is the evening meal ? " I asked. " Perhaps at midday you had such dishes." " No," he said, " we are never asked for them." I said, " Very well, then, I must eat somewhere else." My husband by this time had become interested in the test I was applying. We went up and down the high-street from inn to inn, and they were all full of people eating their evening meal, none of whom was fasting. This was a strange sign in a town which lies in the shadow of Dechani, which for centuries lived not only in a state of ecstatic faith, but by it ; for man loves his little abstinences, and he does not abandon the obscure pleasure of fasting until he actually wishes to dissociate himself from the belief which is its apparent justification. If the West had failed to provide Yugoslavia with a formula for happiness, it could not be pretended that the failure of new things did not matter, because there were old things here which were all the country needed. In parts of the country these old things are as valuable as they ever were, as they have ever been. In other parts they are not

valid. The people will no longer accept them as currency ; and here, since no new currency has been minted there is bankruptcy. As we went back to the restaurant the wind came down from the gorge ice-cold, and like a battering-ram ; there was a sound of splintering wood and the crash of sheet-iron. A small shop had come to pieces.

## MONTENEGRO

### ROAD

I WOKE early. Because of my enquiry into the state of religion in Petch, I had had to dine on sardines, dry bread, red wine and black coffee, and the diet had not suited me. I crept out of my room and along the groaning, grumbling corridors and down into the street, and took a cab out to the Patriarchate, because I wanted to have another look at the huge Madonna and her tiny rebellious and athletic Christ-child. The Albanian cab-driver brought a friend with him on the box, who also, he said, wished to enjoy the opportunity of conversation with me, so I spread out my dictionary on my knee and did what I could for them. The cab-driver was a sombrely handsome young man of a type familiar in the Balkans: his friend was a natural comedian, a Robin Goodfellow, with straight red hair long about his shoulders, a crowing voice and stiff, signalling hands. They were Roman Catholics, but I found they knew nothing of the sayings or doings of Pope Pius X, and most of their Western co-religionists would have found them not altogether congenial. The driver was single, but Robin Goodfellow had married a girl of fourteen seven years ago and had six children. They were resentful against the Government and expressed the desire and even an intention to murder as many of its officials as possible, but their chief grievance seemed nothing more than the price of sugar. This is indeed high, owing to the state monopoly, but not so high as to justify this extreme ferocity. They were very much interested in all sweet things, and had heard about the superiority of English and Swiss chocolate, so I had to talk with the pedantry of a wine connoisseur about Peters and Tobler and Nestlé, Cadbury and

Rowntree and Fry. Jam and spices they wanted to learn about also ; but I failed to surmount the difficulty of describing curry in an imperfectly mastered language. They asked me how old I was, what my husband did, and why he had not come out with me. When I said he was still asleep they suggested to each other, not facetiously, but as realists in a world of men, that he had as like as not been drunk the night before.

The garden of the Patriarchate was golden-green in the slanting early sunlight, the church was honey-coloured and filled with the honey of the Abbot's voice. Among the chief glories of the Orthodox Church are the number of priests who can sing and speak as the mouthpieces of a god should do. I had come in for the end of a service which had been attended by two middle-aged men, who bore themselves like devotees of unusual fervour, some young women with their children, and a number of the straight-backed old ladies in trousers whom I had noticed here before. When the service was over I had half an hour with the frescoes, which were now still lovelier than I had thought them. The morning light, striking the windows of the dome at right angles, was deflected into the softest possible radiance, as it poured down into the church and under it the paintings gave up their full gentleness, the elegance and spring-like freshness that made them kin to much early Italian art. I looked not so long at the terrible Mother and Child as at the scenes which showed the Christian legend taking place in a country that I had thought to be ancient Tuscany, that I now knew to have wider frontiers. Then I went out into the sunlight, warm enough now to draw the scent out of the walnut trees and the pines, and I took a last draught of the healing water from the fountain before I went to say good-bye to the priest, who was drinking his morning coffee at a table under the trees. I stood beside him for a minute before he noticed me, for his Albanian servant and an old labourer had laid down before him a plant with fleshy leaves and stem that had been trampled and broken, and he was staring at it, with his elbows on the table and his coffee-cup held in his hands. I think they were debating what animal had been that way. Their deliberation had an air of essential virtue. By such carefulness life survives.

On the way home the cab-driver and his friend enquired what countries I had visited, and which I liked best. I said I

had been to the United States and every country in Europe except Russia, Roumania, Poland and Portugal ; and that I like Yugoslavia, the United States, France and Finland best of all. They cried out at the name of France. The French they could not abide. They had fought against them in the Great War, they said, and they were glad of it. They liked, they said, the Germans and the Bulgarians, and they hated the Serbs. They both agreed that they would thoroughly enjoy another war if only it would give them the chance of shooting a lot of Serbs. They held up their left arms and looked along them and twitched their right thumbs against their left elbows and said " Boom ! boom ! A Serb is dead ! " I said, " But what have you against the Serbs ? " They said, " After the war they ill-treated us and took our land from us." There was some justification for this, I knew. The district of Petch was handed over to an old man who had been King Peter's Master of the Horse, and he appears, like our own followers of the Belvoir and the Quorn, to have offered conclusive proof of the powerfully degenerative effect of equine society on the intellect. " But now what do they do to you ? " I asked. They shrugged and grumbled. " We live so poor," they said ; " in Albania our brothers live far better than we do." It was as pathetic as the belief of the Bulgarian schoolboy in Bitolj that Bulgaria was a richer country than Yugoslavia ; for everybody who comes out of Albania into Yugoslavia is amazed at the difference, which is all in Yugoslavia's favour, of the standard of living.

When they left me at my hotel, I gave the driver a good tip, and he thanked me in a phrase so remarkable that I made him repeat it several times. But it was true ; he had really said, " I am glad of this money, for to-morrow I am going to Paris to be married." It sounded such a *Sketch* and *Tatler* thing to do that, though by this time I was exhausted by the strain of picking a conversation piecemeal out of a dictionary, I made him explain it. The explanation gave me fresh evidence of the capacity of France to assimilate strange stuff and make it her own. " You must know," he said, " that I am not only the driver of this cab, I own it." " He is Rothschild ! " shrieked Robin Goodfellow, poking him in the ribs, " he owns a dozen cabs." He owned in fact eight. They took the visitors to Dechani, and anyway no woman of property went about Petch on foot except to the market. When he had bought the eighth

he had written to his aunt, who had married the Italian proprietor of a small hotel in Paris, and asked her to find him a wife. She had found him the photographs of several candidates in the Albanian colony of Paris, which was small but prosperous, and he had chosen one to whom he was to be married in five days' time. In a missionary spirit I said, "Is your aunt happy in Paris?" "Yes," he said, "she and her husband made a lot of money, and they say they are very free there." "And the Albanians who live there, are they happy?" "Yes," he answered, "they are all doing well." "But don't you think maybe that means the French are good enough people?" I said. But it was not a point that was likely to convince people who had been brought up to regard as normal a state where different races grew up in conditions decided by a distant ruler. To them the idea of a country being directly governed by its inhabitants is one of abnormal compactness, like a hermaprodite.

I went up to our bedroom and found my husband locking his suitcase. On the middle of my bed there had been built with offensive ingenuity a little cairn of the things I had forgotten to pack in mine. "They are all things," I pointed out, "that I would not mind losing." "Packing," said my husband, "belongs to a different category from criticism." The little Hungarian chambermaid popped her head inside the door, and we tipped her fifty dinars, which is four and twopence, and she thought it so handsome that she kissed my hand furiously. "That is a good little one," said Constantine, as he went downstairs to breakfast; "this morning she helped me to pack and she said to me, 'I tell you, I would have liked to be with you, you are so charming, so very cultured, it might even have been that you would have quoted select passages of poetry to me. So I have been to you every night when I had finished my work, but each time you had fever, you were red as a lobster, so I saw it was not written in the stars that we should be together.'"

We had our breakfast outside the large restaurant, and presently Constantine left us to say good-bye to the Chief of Police, who was giving some advice to a man standing with two pack-horses in the middle of the road, and we were joined by the Danish seller of agricultural machinery, who regarded us with a benevolence that was galling. We had the impression

that he had just received information that we were completely harmless and unimportant, and that in any case even if we had some grain of significance we were leaving, so it did not matter. "You are going, hein?" he said. "Over the mountains to Kolashin and then to Tsetinye? and up the coast to Split, and then to Budapest, and home, very nice, very nice." "How kind of you to be so interested in our itinerary as to find out what it is," said my husband. "Oh, the people here talk, you know," said the alleged Dane. "I should think it more likely that they read," said my husband darkly. There fell a silence, which I weakly broke by saying to him, "Look, do you see that young man walking along carrying that black portfolio? Bow to him, he has greeted us. It is the clerk of the court, who so kindly offered to show us the sights of the town the first night we got here." The alleged Dane burst into laughter. "That young Lümmel! He was fool enough to tell me what he earns. Think of it, he is a university graduate, and he makes each week twelve marks — one of your pounds! Here they're a starveling lot." "Yes, it's a pity they're so poor," said my husband. "For they are such nice people," said I. "You waste your pity," said the alleged Dane, in sudden and brutal passion; "these are Slavs, they have no right to anything, they are as sheep, as cattle, as swine."

The hotel tried to overcharge us, but its experience of the world was so small that its efforts were scarcely perceptible. However, Constantine and Dragutin were very indignant, and we did not get clear of the dispute until ten minutes past seven. Then we started off for the gorge, for Tserna Gora. "Now we will climb like eagles!" cried Dragutin. "And there," he said, as we passed a grassy patch under the willows on the river's bank on the way to the Patriarchate, "is where I have slept each night since we came to Petch. These accursed thieves at the hotel tried to charge me, a chauffeur, for my room at the same rate as you people, and though I knew you would have paid, I would not have it so, and I came out here and flung myself down, and it was no sacrifice, for I slept like a king."

We left the bosomy domes of the Patriarchate behind us, and we went into the Rugovo gorge, which would at any time be superb, and was now a pageant of the sterner beauties possible in nature and man. It was over the rocks at the mouth

of this gorge that the retreating Serbian Army of 1915 pushed its guns lest the Austrians and Bulgarians should make use of them, and walked on into ice and famine; and the scenery is appropriate to that drama. Its sheer precipices and fretted peaks show the iron constitution our planet hides under its grass and flowers; and down the road there were swinging in majestic rhythm men and women who showed the core of hardness humanity keeps under its soft wrapping of flesh. They were going down to the market at Petch, and most were on foot; before nightfall they would return to their homes. And they were coming from villages, five, ten and even fifteen miles up the gorge. In fact, they were going to walk ten to thirty miles in the day, the latter half of the journey up a steep mountain road. It seemed so Herculean a trip that we got Constantine to question two typical wayfarers, an Albanian wearing a white turban with its ends brought across his throat, to hide one of the goitres which are so common in the mountains, and his wife, a raw-boned woman wearing a black dress which oddly broke into a flounce just above her knees, with something of a Cretan air. Yes, they came from that village up there, about a mile away on the hillside, and they would walk to Petch and back by nightfall. There was no question of riding their pack-pony for it was loaded now with what they were going to sell, which was wool, and on the return journey it would be loaded with what they were going to buy, which would probably be wood, if the price were right; in any case I doubt if it could have carried their pylon-like forms. Their leathery faces slowly split into enormous grins as they grasped our astonishment. All these people on the road were very deliberate and stiff and emphatic in their movements and their speech, like frescoes come to life. One woman, who was sitting in a cart with her young child under her blue mantle, resembled exactly one of the Madonnas of Dechani, twisted by the strain put upon her endurance by her love. Again it seemed that Byzantine art is not so much stylised as we believe, and that it may be a more or less naturalist representation of a highly stylised life.

The gorge widened to a valley where snow mountains looked down on beechwoods, widened and steepened to another Switzerland; and so it might be, and may yet become. The grass grows short and thick as gourmand cows would have it. Here there might be cheese and tinned milk and milk chocolate,



if the population could but afford to buy good cows and knew how to keep them. In Stephen Dushan's time fat flocks and herds were driven up here every summer, but under the Turks such luxurious husbandry was forgotten among Christians, and only a few nomads cared for pastures in such a disputed district as the frontier between Montenegro and Albania. Even those had their movements circumscribed by the definition of the Yugoslavian frontier, for some of them had their winter pastures in territory that was assigned to Greece and to Albania, hence they could no longer pass from one to the other. Also there might be practised a moderate form of mountaineering, for there is some excellent rock-climbing and some eternal snow ; but the tradition of guides and chalets has yet to be created. There are as good as Swiss flowers. Where the road mounted to the pass it hairpinned across a slope too high for trees, which was clouded purple with crocuses, golden with kingcups. On the razor-edge of the pass we looked, as one may often do in Switzerland, backward and forward at two worlds. Behind us the mountains stretched to a warm horizon, themselves not utterly cold, as if the low hills and plains beyond exhaled a rich, thawing breath from their fertility. Before us the mountains and valleys fused into a land cooler than all others, as a statue is cooler than a living body. It is not, as the school books have it, that Montenegro is barren : that is a delusion of those who see it only from the sea. Its inland half, if it has little for the plough, has many woods and pastures. But they are held in a cup of rock, they are insulated from the common tide of warmth that suffuses the rest of earth. What the cup holds is pure. In summer, they say there is here pure heat : in autumn pure ripeness : in winter pure cold. Now, in this late springtime it was pure freshness, the undiluted essence of what that season brings the world to renew its youth.

"At this pass was the old Turkish frontier," said Constantine. "And is no more, and is no more, thank God," said Dragutin. Down below, at the end of a valley bright with the thin green flames of beechwoods and clouds of flowers, we came on a poorish village and halted at the inn. "Now I must ask the way to Lake Plav," said Constantine, "for you should certainly see Lake Plav. Did you ever hear of it?" I knew the name. An unfortunate *contretemps* occurred here during the Balkan War. When Montenegro captured the village of Plav

from the Turks in 1912, they were greatly aided by a local Moslem priest, who joined the Orthodox Church and was appointed a major in the Montenegrin Army. His first action when left unsupervised was to hold a court-martial on his former congregation and to shoot all those who refused to be baptized. They numbered, it is said, five hundred. The incident has the terrible quality of juvenile crime. Little Willie was told to be a good boy and keep his baby from crying, and it was precisely because he wanted to be a good boy that he held a pillow over baby's face. I had thought of the place where this happened as a circle of mud huts in a hollow of gleaming stones below vertical mountains. But two or three miles over a bumpy road took us to a place that was a perfect and rounded image of pleasure. A circle of water lay in a square of emerald marshland, fringed with whitish reeds, and framed by hills patterned with green grass and crimson earth, with a sheer wall of snow mountains behind them. The glowing hills and the shining peaks were exactly mirrored in the lake, and received the embellishment of a heavenly bloom peculiar to its waters. We sat down on a stone dyke, shaded by a thorn which the winds had whipped to the form of a modest Chinese lady. Below us a man was cutting turf at the lake edge, and loading it on a bright-blue cart drawn by a grey pony; he was as graceful as if he had never known fatigue in his life, and his white shirt, kilt and trousers and black bolero were white as snow and black as coal against the emerald marsh. This was as good a place as can be, if beauty is of any good. "Lake Plav," said Constantine, "means blue lake. Plav is a strange word. It means blue or fair-haired. All that is beautiful without being sombre."

Back at the inn, we had an early lunch in distasteful surroundings. A dog that had lost a paw limped about our feet; it was still, they said, wonderful at rabbiting, and it looked up at us with the cold eye and the snarl of one who lives in pain and by wile. As we ate, a motor bus which had left Tsetinye at dawn arrived and disgorged a load of pallid people, holding the battered yellow hemispheres of sucked lemons and making no effort to conceal that they had found the remedy against sickness not wholly satisfactory. One demonstrated that in her case it had been completely ineffectual. "There is everything here that Aldous Huxley could desire," said my husband; and it was true, for in the inn garden on the other side of the road

was a little building like a summer-house, poised high on piles over a stream, which we were forced to believe was a sanitary installation of too simple a kind. But squalor is not a Montenegrin characteristic. If the country has a blatant fault, it is a chilling blankness. The typical house stands high-shouldered on a small base under a steeply raked roof tiled with what looks like slate but is pine ; its face is singularly inexpressive. It is often isolated, for as this land was not occupied by the Turks there was not the same necessity to huddle together for protection from armed raiders ; but even when such houses are gathered together in villages they never warm into welcoming sociability. Andrijevitsa, a village of fifteen hundred inhabitants, which we came to after ten miles' drive through olive groves and plum orchards, is well set on a ledge above a river with heaths and pinewoods about it, and has a handsome main street planted with great trees and lined with substantial stone houses, which are ornamented with fine balconies, an architectural feature which marks that one has crossed the cultural watershed and has come down on the side of Dalmatia and Venice and the West, for the Oriental cares little for them. In spite of these advantages its effect on the stranger is cold and dreary. It is as if the genius of the place lacked emotional and intellectual pigmentation. And that effect is intensified by the terrible purity of Montenegrin good looks. The beauty of both the men and the women is beyond what legend paints it ; because legends desire to please, and this perfection demonstrates that there can be too much of a good thing. They are fabulous non-monsters. Such symmetry of feature and figure, such lustre of hair and eye and skin and teeth, such unerring grace, chokes the eye with cream.

Outside the village of Andrijevitsa, on a glassy plateau high above a river, was a kind of park which contained a new white church built in the Byzantine style and a war memorial consisting of a black marble needle marked in white letters with a prodigious number of names. We went to see what this might be, and a young man who had been asleep in the long grass beside the memorial rose up in such white immobile handsomeness as Disraeli would have ascribed to a duke, and told us that it commemorated the members of the Vasoyevitch tribe who had fallen in the wars. The Serbs who took refuge here after Kossovo split up into tribes, each with its own chief, very much

after the order of our Scottish clans, and the Vasoyevitches were among the most powerful. All four sides of the needle were covered with names ; there must have been seven or eight hundred of them. I exclaimed aloud when I saw that the inscription gave the dates of the war as 1912-21, but of course it is true that this country was continually under arms for nine years. First they joined with the Serbs in the Balkan wars, but when the Turks were beaten they had to continue a local war with the Albanians until the Great War came, and then the Austrians attacked them ; and the peace brought them none, for they fought against the Serbs in protest against their incorporation in Yugoslavia. As we stood there we were joined by an elderly woman, poorly dressed but quite as aristocratic-looking as the young man ; and they acted as our host and hostess in a tour of interesting graves. Two generals belonging to the tribe were buried in the park ; and over the road, in the open heathland, lay two tribesmen who had been hanged on this spot by the Austrians, and not far off two other members of an earlier generation who had been imprudent enough to demand a Liberal constitution from King Nicholas.

The air we breathed was pine-scented and rarefied by height ; the moorland and mountain and waters about us enjoyed their elemental innocence ; these marvellously beautiful people, placid as prize animals, showed us the tombs of their butchered kin. I remembered that this country, with greater certainty than any other country that I could think of, might attribute its survival to one single event, and that that event was loathsome in character. For three hundred years after Kossovo the Montenegrins fought against the Turks with unrelenting courage, and vanquished them again and again. But when the Turks were outside Vienna in 1683 and then were driven out of Hungary they turned their full attention to this enemy who was weaker and nearer home. They marched through the mountains, guided by Montenegrins who had adopted the Islamic faith, and they occupied Tsetinye. Thereafter it seemed that the last Christian Slav stronghold must fall, largely because there were so many of the renegades. Two-thirds of the Albanian people had been converted during the seventeenth century, and it looked as if their example had corrupted their neighbours. In 1702 a Bishop was kidnapped by the Turks when he was on his way home from the conse-

cratation of a new church and he was held to ransom. The ruler of Montenegro, Daniel Nyegosh, saw that his people must strike then or perish. It is told in one of the national ballads that he called a meeting of the tribes and bade them go forth on Christmas Eve and offer every Montenegrin Mohammedan the choice between baptism and death. Five brothers named Martinovitch alone obeyed him, and though the ballad assumes that they themselves executed the plan, it is obvious that they must have used the whole of their tribe. "The time fixed for the holy vigil is at hand; the brothers Martinovitch light their holy tapers, pray earnestly to the new-born God, drink each a cup of wine to the glory of Christ. Seizing their consecrated maces, they set out in the dark."

I am on the side of the brothers Martinovitch. Having seen what Turkish conquest meant to the Slav, it is certain they were justified in their crime. A man is not a man if he will not save his seed. But the destiny is abhorrent that compelled the brothers, who may be assumed to have been of flawless and inhuman beauty, like the Montenegrins of to-day, to go out into the night and murder the renegades, who also would be beautiful. "Please give me some brandy," I said to my husband, "I feel rather ill." But when he poured it out of his flask it was not what I wanted. I would have preferred a drink that was enormously strong, that would instantly have clouded my consciousness, that would have smelt of nothing, like vodka. The bouquet of brandy recalls the pageant of the earth, the lovely and logical process of flower and fruit that causes man, with his leaning towards argument by analogy, to harbour such excessive hopes concerning his own life. It is a subtlety, and up here subtleties seemed doomed. As we drove out of the heathland into greener country, where there were farms that were astonishingly trim, considering they had to stand on end, we passed churches that had neither within nor without the faintest air of mysticism. They might have been town-halls or even, in some cases, blockhouses.

That was natural enough, for in Montenegro Church and State were till recently not merely welded but identical. In the sixteenth century the last king of the line of John Tserno, John the Outlaw, after whom the land was named Tserna Gora, abdicated and went to live in Venice; and before he left he called an assembly of the people and transferred his authority

to the Bishop of Tsetinye, who was the head of the Montenegrin Church. Even so the Emperor Constantine the Great, on leaving Rome to found Constantinople, transferred his authority to the Pope, and thus gave the Papacy its claim to temporal power. Thus it happened that until 1851, when Danilo II fell in love with a pretty girl and changed the constitution so that he could marry her and transmit his royalty to their children, Montenegro was governed by a succession of Prince-Bishops who passed their power from uncle to nephew. The Church was, therefore, the Government, and its buildings were therefore adapted to the State's chief function, which was to resist the Turk: not here could goodness be adored and its indestructibility be recognised in ecstasy. The first and real need was an altar where the Martinovitch brothers could take a stirrup-cup before they set out on their pious errand, their truly pious errand, swinging their consecrated maces. Christianity was still an inspiration, and one that had proven its worth, but, like Montenegrin houses and good looks, it was too simple, too stark, so full of one perfect thing that it was as good as empty.

"Have the Montenegrins not made enormous sacrifices to preserve their independence?" I asked Constantine, and he answered, "Greater than you can believe. They have sacrificed almost everything except their heroism. They are nothing but heroes. If they eat or sleep it is so that they shall wake up heroes. If they marry it is so that they should beget little heroes, who would not trouble to come out of their mothers' wombs were they not certain that they would grow up in heroism. They are as like the people of Homer as any race now living: they are brave, and beautiful, and vainglorious. A soldier must be vainglorious. He must go into the battle believing that he is so wonderful a human being that God could not let it be that the lesser men in front of him should kill him. And since the men in front of them were Turks who were often really prodigious fighters, there was no end to the fairy-tales that the Montenegrins had to tell to themselves about themselves. You get it in the two classic stories that are always told about these people. One is really true; it was a thing noticed in the Balkan wars. You know that when soldiers drill they have to number off—'One, two, one, two'. In the Montenegrin Army it could not be done. No man was willing to be second, so the first man said, 'One', and the second said, 'I-am-beside-him',

very quickly. The other may be true, but perhaps only in the spirit. It is said that a traveller said to a Montenegrin, 'How many of your people are there?' and he answered, 'With Russia, one hundred and eighty millions', and the traveller, knowing there were not two hundred thousand of them, said, 'Yes, but how many without the Russians?' and the Montenegrin answered, 'We will never desert the Russians'. And it was not a joke, for the vainglory of these people was necessary to them lest they should be conquered in battle.

"This vainglory will not permit them to have any other characteristics, except a little cunning that is quite simple, like the cunning of the Homeric heroes, for to be perfectly and absolutely vainglorious you must hold back from all activity, because you dare not ever fail at anything. So the Montenegrins are not really interested in any kind of work, and that makes it very difficult to fit them into the modern state of Yugoslavia. For in earlier centuries they lived by fighting which always included a lot of looting, and by foreign subsidies, which were freely given, as this state was an important strategic point on the Adriatic coast; and in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries they lived very much on these subsidies, particularly from Russia. And now all that is over, and they must earn their livings, and they do not want to do anything at all, for even farming used to be done chiefly by their women, since they always were at war or resting between wars, and no work interests them. No child here says, 'I would like to be a builder, or a doctor, or a carpenter', though some want to be chauffeurs because to them it is still a daring and romantic occupation. So they pester the Government with demands for posts as functionaries and for pensions, which are of a terrible simplicity, for there is no need for so many functionaries, and if there were these people could not perform their functions, and God Himself, if He had a knife at His throat, could not invent a reason why they should all have pensions. This is hard on a poor country like Yugoslavia, and this is not an easy matter to settle by patience and patriotism, as many things can be settled in Bosnia and Old Serbia and Macedonia, because the Montenegrins are empty-headed except for their wild and unthinking heroism, which is to say they are often like madmen. I tell it you, this country is a sacrifice to itself of itself, and there is nothing left."

There is no way out of the soul's dilemma. Those displeased by the rite on the Sheep's Field, who would be neither the priest nor the black lamb, who would be neither converted to Islam nor defeated on Kossovo plain, are forced to fight the priest. Since we must live in the same world as those we fight, this means sharing this upland bleakness, furnished too simply with its bloodstained monolith. "Whoso liveth by the sword shall die by the sword" is only half the damnatory sentence passed on mankind by war; the other half reads, "whoso refuseth to die by the sword shall live by the sword." Montenegro was something like a prison. Though it was airy as heaven, instead of airless, like other prisons, it was stony like a cell, and it reeked of heroism as strongly as institutions reek of disinfectant; and the straitened inhabitants were sealed up in space with the ideas of slaughter and triumph as convicts are in their confinement with guilt and punishment. If one shut the eyes and thought of any pleasantness but the most elemental, any enjoyment that helped the mind further on its task of exploring the universe, one had to say on opening them, "It is not here, nothing but the root of it is here".

So it seemed. Then the road looped round the mountainside to a steeper mountain, and wound up to yet another pass, so high that as we rose the noontide sky showed pale above the distant peaks, though it was deeply blue above us. The country which here is highly variable, changed its character again; it was Buckinghamshire on this cool northward slope, so tall the beeches, so dense the woods they drove to the skyline, so gardenish the grass. Up and up we drove until we had to stop, to cool the engine. We none of us regretted it, for there were many gentians on the banks beside the road, and below us the woods lay like bonfires of green flame on the mild rolling turf, and further the distant infinity of mountains was blue as wild hyacinths. We sat there so long that a woman we had passed on a lower curve of the road overtook us, halted in her trudging, came up to the car, and laid her arm along the frame of the open window, looking round at us all. Her face had once been perfect but was no longer so, and was the better for it. "Good morning," she said to Constantine, "who are you?" "I am Constantine," he said. "I am from Shabats, and I am a poet." "And who are you?" she asked my husband and me. "They are English," said Constantine. "A very



fine people," she said. "Why do you think that?" said Constantine. "Because they are great fighters, and they love nature," she said. "How do you know they are like that?" asked Constantine. She lifted her arm from the window, took a ball of fine white wool and knitting-needles from her other hand, and set to work again, as if judging from his question an indication that the conversation might not be of the first order and she might as well get on with her material duties. "Oh, everybody knows that," she answered absently. "And you," said Constantine, "who are you? Are you a native of this place?" "No," she said, "I live here now, but I was born by Durmitor." Durmitor is the great snow mountain, with a black lake at its foot, on the northern side of Montenegro. "Who brought you here?" asked Constantine.

She laughed a little, lifted her ball of wool to her mouth, sucked the thin thread between her lips and stood rocking herself, her eyebrows arching in misery. "It is a long story. I am sixty now," she said. "Before the war I was married over there, by Durmitor. I had a husband whom I liked very much, and I had two children, a son and a daughter. In 1914 my husband was killed by the Austrians. Not in battle. They took him out of our house and shot him. My son went off and was a soldier and was killed, and my daughter and I were sent to a camp. There she died. In the camp it was terrible, many people died. At the end of the war I came out and I was alone. So I married a man twenty years older than myself. I did not like him as I liked my first husband, but he was very kind to me, and I had two children of his. But they both died, as was natural, for he was too old, and I was too old, and also I was weak from the camp. And now my husband is eighty, and he has lost his wits, and he is not kind to me any more. He is angry with everybody; he sits in his house and rages, and I cannot do anything right for him. So I have nothing." "Are you poor?" asked Constantine. "Not at all," she said. "My husband's son by his first wife is a judge in Old Serbia, and he sends me three hundred dinars a month to hire a man to work our land, so we want nothing. Oh, that is all right, but the rest is so wrong." "Oh, sister, sister," said Constantine, "this is very hard." "Yes, it's hard," she said. "And can we do nothing for you," asked Constantine, "for we feel very friendly towards you? Can we not give you a lift to where

you are going ? " " That you cannot do, though you mean so kindly," she said, " for I am not going anywhere. I am walking about to try to understand why all this has happened. If I had to live, why should my life have been like this ? If I walk about up here where it is very high and grand it seems to me I am nearer to understanding it." She put the ball of wool to her forehead and rubbed it backwards and forwards, while her eyes filled with painful speculation. " Good-bye," she said, with distracted courtesy, as she moved away, " good-bye."

This woman was of no importance. It is doubtful whether, walk as she would on these heights, she would arrive at any conclusion that was of value even to herself. She was, however, the answer to my doubts. She took her destiny not as the beasts take it, nor as the plants and trees ; she not only suffered it, she examined it. As the sword swept down on her through the darkness she threw out her hand and caught the blade as it fell, not caring if she cut her fingers so long as she could question its substance where it had been forged, and who was the wielder. She wanted to understand the secret which Gerda denied, the mystery of process. I knew that art and science were the instruments of this desire, and this was their sole justification, though in the Western world where I lived I had seen art debauched to ornament and science prostituted to the multiplication of gadgets. I knew that they were descended from man's primitive necessities, that the cave man who had to hunt the aurochs drew him on the rock-face that he might better understand the aurochs and have fuller fortune in hunting, was the ancestor of all artists, that the nomad who had to watch the length of shadows to know when he should move his herd to the summer pasture was the ancestor of all scientists. But I did not know these things thoroughly with my bowels as well as my mind. I knew them now, when I saw the desire for understanding move this woman. It might have been far otherwise with her, for she had been confined by her people's past and present to a kind of destiny that might have stunned its victims into an inability to examine it. Nevertheless she desired neither peace nor gold, but simply knowledge of what her life might mean. The instrument used by the hunter and the nomad was not too blunt to turn to finer uses ; it was not dismayed by complexity, and it could regard the more stupendous aurochs that range within the mind and measure the diffuse shadows cast by history. And

what was more, the human will did not forget its appetite for using it.

I remembered what Denis Saurat had said about Militsa : " If there are but twenty people like her scattered between here and China, civilisation will survive ". If during the next million generations there is but one human being born in every generation who will not cease to enquire into the nature of his fate, even while it strips and bludgeons him, some day we shall read the riddle of our universe. We shall discover what work we have been called to do, and why we cannot do it. If a mine fails to profit by its riches and a church wastes the treasure of its altar, we shall know the cause : we shall find out why we draw the knife across the throat of the black lamb or take its place on the offensive rock, and why we let the grey falcon nest in our bosom, though it buries its beak in our veins. We shall put our own madness in irons. Then, having defeated our own enmity, we shall be able to face the destiny forced on us by nature, and war with that. And what does that mean ? What name is behind nature, what name but one name ? Then there will be the wrestling match that is worth the prize, then defeat will be eternal glory, then there can be no issue but magnificence. That contest may endure a million, million years, seeing the might of the combatants. And after that, what then ? Could the mind twitch away the black curtain behind the stars, it might be dazzled by a brightness brighter than the stars, which might be the battle-field for another splendid conflict as yet not to be conceived. It was towards this splendour that the woman was leading, as we passed her later, leaving the road and treading a path over the turf among gentians which she did not see. " Good-bye ! " Dragutin cried to her. " Good-bye, Mother ! "

### *Kolashin*

Save for a peppering of graves by the roadside, this might have been a better Lake District, a lovelier Coniston. About four in the afternoon we came on the town, which was of the prim and stony Montenegrin pattern, lying on a plain surrounded by shapely hills feathered with delicate woodland, and which greeted us with an inn terrible in its cleanliness, and awe-inspiring in its landlady. She was one of those widows whose

majesty makes their husbands seem specially dead. Her large Elgin Marble head bore a crown of lustrous black plaits, and was veiled by a black lace mantilla: her full black gown draped a massive and dignified body which it was impossible to imagine as divided into limbs in the usual manner. While we drank some coffee in the dining-room she bent over us, directing the immense lamps of her eyes on Constantine, and addressed us for some stately moments. I asked in amazement, "Is she reciting an ode of welcome?" "Not at all," said Constantine, "she is telling me that the house is in great disorder because she is having a bathroom and a water-closet put in, but that they will not be ready for ten days, so that in the meantime you will have to wash in a tin basin and use the earth-closet at the end of the garden."

"But surely," I interrupted, after a minute or so, "she is speaking in Alexandrines." "No, in blank verse," said Constantine, "there are ten iambs and not twelve in each of her sentences. All Montenegrins speak so when they are at all formal, which is to say when there is any but their family listening. Listen, she is going on to tell us that our Prime Minister, Mr. Stoyadinovitch, always stays here, and it is true, for this is his constituency. You will find that she says it all in blank verse." And so she did. I had been misled into thinking that the measure was Alexandrine because of the singing sweet yet faintly nasal quality of her speech, which recalled a poetry *matinée* at the *Comédie Française*. Serbo-Croat is, of course, a language that falls very easily into verse, and until recently was encouraged to do so on occasions at all exalted above the ordinary: when the great American foreign correspondent, Stephen Bonsal, first came to the Balkans in the early 'nineties he was enchanted to hear the Serbian Minister of Finance introducing his budget in the form of a long poem in blank verse. The logic is obvious. A free people who could make their lives as dignified as they could would naturally choose to speak in verse rather than in prose, as one would choose to wear silk rather than linen. There is, of course, a flaw in the logic, because there are many occasions on which linen and prose are more convenient to wear than silk and verse.

There called on us presently the Chief of Police, who invited us to come with him to see a lake that was fifteen miles or so away. I looked at him with respect, as at a Wild Western

sheriff, for Kolashin is no tender district. Its original name was Kol i shen, which, tortuously enough, is the Albanian for St. Nicholas. Though it was a Serb settlement in the days of the medieval Serbian Empire, it was later invaded by Catholic Albanians, and in time became a fortified Turkish outpost. During the eighteenth century it happened here, as in many other parts of Montenegro, that the Albanians merged with the Serbs, adopting their language and the Orthodox Faith. Those Albanians who did not do so often joined with the Albanians on Turkish territory to attack the Christianised Albanians. As a climax in 1858 the members of several tribes in the neighbourhood attacked the town and destroyed all the inhabitants who had kept their Albanian identity or who were Moslem. Thereafter there was a kind of surly peace in the district, but it developed a spirit of resistance, of independence, tending towards pure negativism, which made them bitterly resentful after the war when Montenegro was amalgamated with Yugoslavia.

This disaffection had quieted down, for here there were certainly no signs of resentment at the Government automobile as there were in the Macedonian districts where there were unpacified Bulgarians, but it was improbable that it had yet become the bride of quietness. And indeed nothing in the appearance of the Chief of Police suggested that he would have been there if it had. He had a face so tough and imperturbable that one could have played darts on it. But his manners were excellent, and it was with real courtliness that he led us out to the local automobile which we were to use for going to the lake, since ours was too heavy for the road. Like all Montenegrin automobiles, it was a debauched piece of ironmongery. This idyllic country, fresh under every dawn as Nausicaa going down to bathe with her maidens, unmarred by a railway system and possessing no modern nor indeed even medieval town, which is but pastures and woodlands and mountains and primitive villages, set on earth sweet as new bread taken from the oven, is defiled by the presence on its roads of twisted and pointless wrecks of automobiles, which might have been salvaged from Slough dump, driven by lads who have an air of enacting a heroic fantasy. One such, pale and statuesque, with self-consciously dilated nostrils, stood beside this black and crooked carcass.

In the gold of the late afternoon we drove beside a clear brawling river, over a cultivated plain into a valley that was like Coniston Crag, recollected in a dream under an opiate which let the mind stretch a point in favour of loveliness rather than probability. We passed into a beechwood and ran on out of shadow lit by the silver trunks and sunlight stained green, till we were halted by the strange lateral summer of an uprooted tree. My husband and I walked off first with the chauffeur as guide, and Dragutin lingered behind us, looking for animals, catching us up sometimes to show us an emerald beetle or some such creature. Well behind us came Constantine and the Chief of Police, who like the Chief of Police at Petch, had an air of being a harassed governess in charge of backward and undisciplined children, and was taking the chance to pour out his grievances. After a mile or so the chauffeur told us we must leave the road and take a short cut up the hillside. We turned and saw Dragutin on his knees beside a tangle of tree roots, casting a spell on some form of life, and called to him, pointing upwards to our new path. We found the climb very pleasant, following the soft track through the beechmast under the flaming green roof of tree-tops, for we had had little opportunity of late to take any real exercise. Once I looked back and could not see Dragutin anywhere, so I came to a halt, and heard some shouting down below. It occurred to me that we might have come the wrong way and that the others might be trying to recall us, so I asked the chauffeur, "Is this really the path?" He replied, "Yes," very emphatically, so we shouted to give the others our direction, and pushed on. The path now swung from side to side to avoid some steep stone bluffs, and for a time I was preoccupied in keeping my footing on it. Then I paused to look back. Even now there was nobody in sight. I shouted and no answer came.

Though the tree-tops above us were still catching the sun all the woods below us were in shadow. The sun was setting. I looked at my watch and said to my husband, "Do you know we have been climbing for half an hour? This cannot be right." But he learned his climbing in Switzerland, and is indoctrinated with the necessity for trusting the guide. "The lad lives here," he said, "he must know the way." I asked again, "Are you sure this is the path?" He answered strangely, looking back as if a danger were pursuing us up the hillside,

but impatiently waved us up the path. \* We worked on for another five minutes up a patch of hillside so steep that I had to plod along with my knees bent and my head down. When I straightened myself my eyes fell on the chauffeur standing some distance ahead with his back to us, and his hand raised on a level with his head and pressed flat against a tree-trunk. This meaningless attitude somehow expressed a definite meaning. I knew that he was lost. I cried out, "Let us go down again!" but he turned on me a face dark with sullen terror, and at once ran away among the thickets and the tree-trunks.

In a second he was lost to me, for the whole wood was in shadow. I turned and shouted into the darkening valley below me, and there was no reply. My husband was standing a little way off, and I went to him, and put my arm in his, saying, "Where on earth has that wretched boy gone?" He answered, "I think there is a woodcutter's hut in the hollow over there, he has probably gone to see if there is anybody there who knows the way. It will be all right." Just then the chauffeur came back, hurrying so much that he often stumbled, and behind him were two men and a boy in wild white clothes, who were crying out to him in tones of warning and anguish. I could not find any satisfying interpretation of the scene. For a minute it passed through my mind that we had been led into a camp of brigands who would hold us for ransom, but this seemed an unlikely enterprise, since the Chief of Police was one of the party. And it was away from these people that the chauffeur led us, when, scrambling up from a fall and brushing the beechmast off his clothes, he stood up before us and panted, with the sweat running down his brow. "This way! This way!" I looked round to see what danger could be threatening us from the quarter he wanted us to flee, thinking of landslides and forest fires, but there was not a grain of earth shifting on the hill, and the air smelt of nothing but evening.

"Here!" said the chauffeur. "Here!" He had brought us, with the two men and the boy in white clothes at our heels, to the top of a cliff, where stunted trees leaned into an abyss they veiled with their foliage. "Where?" He pointed at a track down the face of the cliff which was no more than a mere slippery edge, pressed two or three inches out of the level by a geological fault. I said, "We cannot go down here in a failing light." The chauffeur was moved to agony by my hesitation.

"You must go! You must go!" he groaned. "He must think we are in some danger," I said to my husband, "but what is it?" "I have no idea," he said. I looked back at the people in white clothes, meaning to ask their advice, and I found the two men stiffened in attitudes of horror and despair, while the boy, who alone of his straight-nosed people had a nose snub as if it had been pressed against something for most of his life, had come forward as if following his own goggling gaze. "Look!" I cried to my husband, and he turned and saw them also. But he speaks even less Serbian than I do, which is to say he speaks no Serbian at all. So it was I who had to say to the chauffeur, "We will not go by that path. Take us back to the Chief of Police." But he answered through his set teeth, "You must go here! Come, come!"

His resolution weakened mine; but I turned to look at the people in white clothes, and found that the relief they were showing was so great that our refusal to go down the cliff must have had some enormous implications for them, as enormous, say, as the difference between us alive and us dead. I said again, "Take us back to the Chief of Police!" But his face grew desperate, and he stepped towards me as if he were going to lay hands on me. I realised that I must act as if I were more dangerous than the unknown object of his fear. It had to be a dramatic performance, for I keep no fury in stock, rage makes me silent. I thought of Charlotte Brontë's description of Rachel in *Villette* and, modelling myself on those lines, I waved my arms at the chauffeur and shrieked, "To the Chief of Police! Down the hill! To the Chief of Police!" He gaped, recoiled, and ran helter-skelter down the hill through the trees, looking back at me and crying, with conciliatory gestures, "Yes, this is the road!" The breaking of a branch on our left turned our heads that way, and we saw that the snub-nosed boy belonging to the woodcutters was running down the hill along a course parallel to our track, but about thirty yards away, keeping his face turned towards us as though we were a great wonder and he could not bear to lose sight of us for a second. The chauffeur came to a halt, for the reason that I was out of breath and had not made a minatory sound for some time; he folded his arms and looked sullen. But from the valley below we heard an outburst of panic-stricken shouting and the thin drill of a police whistle. We were at the top of the line of



stony bluffs, and I had no idea of the way down. I could think of no more Serbian words, so I began to shriek in the rhythm of the Valkyries, and the chauffeur dived forward again.

When we met they were all white-faced, Constantine and the Chief of Police and Dragutin. "But what have you been doing?" screamed Constantine. "Why did you not come back? We have been yelling and yelling and blowing the whistle till we have broken our hearts!" "Where did you take them?" the Chief of Police shouted at the chauffeur. "He took us," I said, "to the top of the hill, and then he wanted us to go down a track across the face of a cliff." The Chief of Police threw up his hands. "That track!" he cried. The chauffeur who had thrown his head back and was looking very noble, said something, and Constantine cried, "But he says that he did not want to take you anywhere, that you insisted on climbing the hill, and that he did not ask you to go down the cliff, but it was your idea." I exclaimed, "But what an astonishing liar!" but my husband said, "Wait a minute, there is something here we do not understand. We may be doing the lad an injustice. You see, up on the hill he began to look disturbed, and my wife asked him if he had lost his way. Then he seemed definitely distressed, and we gathered he was afraid of something. When he wanted us to go down the cliff path, it was as if it was necessary we should do so, as if——" "Yes, it was necessary," screamed Constantine, "for a Montenegrin!" He repeated to the others what my husband had said, and they made signs of impatience and scorn, the Chief of Police holding his head and groaning, Dragutin spitting between his feet.

"These Montenegrins," hissed Constantine, "you have not listened to what I have told you about them. I say they are all heroes, they are boastful imbeciles, like the Homeric heroes, and this little *espèce de héros* could not bear to admit to you and to us that he had lost his way and had guided you all wrong. So you had to go down the face of a cliff, you had perhaps to die, in order to show that after all he was right, there was a way." He shook his clenched fists in the chauffeur's face, shouting, "How dared you take them that dangerous way?" He shook back his longish hair and replied haughtily, "The way was not dangerous." "That it was," piped a voice behind. The woodcutter's boy had silently joined us in the dusk. "We told him how dangerous it was. I cannot go that path,

even I in my bare feet, and the lady and gentleman would slip at once in their shoes. Indeed nobody goes that path. It has not been safe for years, and since the great storm last winter trees and lumps of rock fall away from the cliff all the time. My father and my uncles never work under it if they can help." Shuddering, I said, "It cannot be so bad. After all, if we had died, he would have been killed too." "Do you think that would matter to a Montenegrin?" spluttered Constantine.

A silence fell. The three men looked murderously at the chauffeur. His head went higher and a white tooth bit into his lower lip. The woodcutter's boy, regarding him with a territorial malice that thoroughly enjoyed what evils might befall the inhabitant of another village, drew closer to see the fun. "And now could we possibly see the lake?" suggested my husband. Constantine and the Chief of Police looked at him as if he were interrupting a trial or a church service. "It is, after all, what we came here for," insisted my husband, and they gave in to him, because they were not sure whether he was being quite idiotic, so idiotic that it was useless trying to act reasonably in his neighbourhood, or whether he was practising some last exotic refinement of gentlemanliness. We caught the lake in its last moment of beauty before the dusk took away its colour; beechwoods drooped over a mirror, and behind them pinewoods mounted black over castellated peaks. The trouble was that we could none of us see it, though we sat down on a bench facing it. I was violently shaken by the realisation that my husband and I had just escaped being dashed to pieces in order that a young man whom we had never seen till then should not have to admit that he had lost his way. Constantine and the Chief of Police were shaking with rage, Dragutin was uneasy as a child who is obliged to be present at another's punishment, the chauffeur leaned against a tree-trunk, his chin up and his arms folded.

Constantine burst out, "You see how stubborn they are! They are heroes, they must always go on, they cannot go back, not even if it is merely an evening promenade that is in question, and going on means that you must die! How we are to change them into reasonable men, men of our times, if we are not to beat and beat and beat them?" "Well, if they had not been like this they would not have kept off the Turk so successfully," said my husband. "Yes, but if what was good has been done

must it be to do for ever and ever ? " asked Constantine angrily. " I have in my time done many things that were excessively brave, in North Bosnia during the war I have cut myself out of a valley through the bodies of many soldiers with my bayonet, in Bulgaria after the peace I have saved my troops by seizing a railway train *in manu militari*. Must I then always be killing people by my bayonet, must I every day seize a railway train, because it was good that I did so once ? " The Chief of Police and he then carried on a passionate exchange of complaining undertones, until the chauffeur cleared his throat and made a remark with an air of sense and dignity, in correct blank verse metre, and they both broke out into angry shouts. " He is saying such fatuities," cried Constantine ; " he is saying that you wanted to go to the edge of the cliff to look at the view." " Nevertheless," said my husband, " I think that the person concerned in this incident for whom I feel the least affection is the woodcutter's boy. Look, he is watching us from under that elder tree on the left." " What have you against the little one ? " asked Constantine. " I feel so strongly," said my husband, " that if we had gone over the cliff he would have been the first, by quite a long way, to find our bodies."

When we returned to the inn I was very tired, for it was now thirteen hours since I had risen to go to the Patriarchate at Petch, and I thought I would not be able to eat any dinner. But I ate a great deal, for the stately landlady brought us rich bean soup, and some home-cured raw ham, and a dish of lamb roasted with herbs, and a pile of little cakes, made in the Turkish fashion, of pounded fruit and nuts pressed between two layers of pastry, very well made indeed. There was also some good wine from the southern slope of Montenegro. Dragutin was eating at a table in the opposite corner of the dining-room from ours, and we and he raised our glasses and drank to the health of the widow, who stood in the centre of the room, responding with unexpected animation by contralto cluckings and coy agitations of her black draperies ; it was as if we had pleased a rookery.

All was drowsy and agreeable, when the door opened, or rather was thrown open with considerable panache, and the chauffeur came in, very pale. We all fell still and watched him as he came across to our table and halted. " What is it ? what is it ? " asked Constantine, and the boy set out on a speech, all

in blank verse. Constantine shot out of his chair, he beat the table with his fist, he screamed at the boy, and Dragutin stood up, uttering cries of derision and rage. "Will you believe it?" Constantine explained when he had gone, "he does not come to say he is sorry, he is still trying to prove that it was not a fault to take you to that cliff where you might have been dashed to a thousand pieces." He shuddered and took a deep draught from his glass, wincing at what he saw at the bottom of it. Then his face was shadowed by sinister recollection, by caution, by malice. He remembered that we were English, that we were Liberals, that we liked him; and the disposition he had made of his soul required that he should be loyal only to those who were German, who were Nazi, who despised him. He snarled, "See what trouble you have caused by always being so independent! You two must always do the thing that is extra! If you had kept by the Chief of Police and myself we would have had none of this trouble!" There was nothing for us to say, the charge was so unjust, for we had been sent ahead with the chauffeur as our guide. When Constantine saw that we were not going to answer he looked at Dragutin and repeated what he had said in Serbian. But Dragutin also said nothing.

The widow grew sensible of a change in the atmosphere and began moving about the room on petty errands, tweaking a curtain straight, taking away an empty salt-cellar. My husband put a match to a cigar and said over the flame, "I do not know why I have never asked you this before, Constantine, for it has often come into my mind. Did you ever pass through a phase in your youth when there seemed to you that no writer existed except Dostoevsky?" The sneer, the look of self-dedication to death vanished from Constantine's face. He said, "For two years it was so with me. But indeed it was more than so, for I felt that I myself did not exist save as a part of Dostoevsky's mind. I would ask myself, whenever I was at a new thing, 'Who are you now? Are you Stavrogin or Shatov? Are you Karmazinov or Alyosha?'" He set about defining the revelation that Dostoevsky had made to all of us, talking as brilliantly and nobly as I had ever heard him. "Turgeniev is greater than he, the critics say, and they are right, but if we had not been saved from the pit by Dostoevsky we would not be here to read Turgeniev. . . ."

Nevertheless I shook with a chill that even his recovered fire could not exorcise. The chauffeur had been willing to cast away his life on the hills, and ours also, in order that he should not be thought foolish enough not to know a certain path ; Constantine was willing to cast away his self-respect, and indeed all he cared for, art and philosophy and his country's life, for a cause as frivolous : he wished to win the good opinion of those who had given him a sense of their social superiority by pointing out that Berlin was a richer city than Belgrade. So one could not say of the chauffeur, " He has erred out of curable ignorance," because Constantine, who was one of the most gifted and learned men in Europe, surpassed him in guilt, and one could not say of Constantine, " He would not plan his self-destruction had he not overstrained our human equipment," because the chauffeur had committed the same offence in a state of simplicity. The woman we had met walking on the mountains that afternoon seemed not such a consoling portent as I had thought her. On the great mountains she was so small ; against the black universal mass of our insanity her desire for understanding seemed so weak a weapon. Therefore I shuddered, and could take no pleasure in the genius of my friend, nor in my husband's kindness to my friend. I was glad when the widow rose from her seat by the hearth, and, to let us know that hours were getting late for Kolashin, gave us a message which I think Constantine failed to translate with his usual felicity. For I am almost sure that she said she was anxious to do everything she could for us, and that we had better use the earth-closet while the lantern in the garden was still alight ; but Constantine announced, " The widow says she will give you her all, and hopes you will go to the closet before you have an accident."

### *Podgoritsa*

We left the inn early, taking all the remaining little cakes the widow could give us, and travelled for some miles further through the beechwoods and streams of this sensuous version of the Lake District. Then we crossed a pass into the traditional Montenegro, the land which defies cultivation so that no peasantry could live there were its breast not bound with oak and triple bronze. It is an astonishing country, even to those who know the

bleakness of Switzerland and Scotland and the Rockies. There one sees often enough trees growing askew from the interstices of a hillside paved with rocky slabs ; but here it is as if a volcanic eruption had been arrested just at the moment when it was about to send the whole countryside flying into the air. The hillside bulges outwards, and slabs and trees jut out at frantic angles to a surface itself at a frantic angle. The inhabitants of such a fractured and anfractuons landscape are obliged to alter some of the activities that might be thought to be unalterably the same all the world over. There could be no such thing as strolling a few hundred yards from one point to another ; the distance could be covered only by jumping, striding and climbing, unless a track were made.

But the next pass brought us to a district even wilder and less easily habitable. It could not be accurately called barren, for there was a certain amount of very rich earth to be seen ; but again it had suffered an internal assault that had sent it spinning. We have all seen houses so ruined that only part of the ground-floor walls were left standing, to define rooms that were now plots where grass and weeds and flowers grew more lush than in the wilderness outside. Here it is as if the whole mountain-side for twenty miles around were covered with such houses, but the walls were of lilac-blue rock and no mason had built them. If the plots they defined were more than a few yards across crops grew there, or stunted trees, for we were drawing nearer the Adriatic, where timber is precious. But if these plots were small or inaccessible they flamed with flowers, with thickets of tall iris and torches of broom, rising out of the blanched hellebore. It was a hungry scene, yet it offered distractions to hunger.

As we came down towards the lowlands and the distant sea we ran within sight of a canyon, cut by a river that flowed a dull bright-green, clear and yet snake-like, over sand and pebbles. This colour delights the Yugoslavs very much. It is mentioned in the folk-songs of the district, and all sorts of people, from Militsa to an assistant in a Belgrade shoe-shop, had said to me, " You are going to Montenegro ? Then you must look long at the water of the Moracha, which runs through Podgoritsa, for it is very beautiful." Beyond the canyon were low mountains ruled into natural terraces so level that the artificial terraces on the fertile land at their base seemed faultily ruled. Then the distance flattened out into plains, and before we got to them we

halted for a minute or two to hang over a bridge that spanned a river sent down from the mountains to join the Moracha. "This bridge," said Constantine, "was fought over again and again by the Turks and the Montenegrins, again and again it has run with blood. For this is the key position to these fertile flatlands, which are the best part of the Zeta, which was Turkish until the Montenegrins took it from them once and for all in 1876." "They are good lands," said Dragutin, rubbing his stomach; "now others as well as the Turk can eat." "God, why do you speak of eating when we are out here in the country!" exclaimed Constantine. "Drive us at once to Podgoritsa."

We travelled fast beside the river in the canyon, which runs all the way into the town without losing the integrity of its strange and brilliant colour, and soon we were eating trout in the dining-room of the principal hotel. We had not wasted one moment looking at the sights of Podgoritsa, for too evidently it has none. There are hardly any relics of the Turkish occupation; and as a modern town it lacks charm. It is solid, for it used to be the second town of Montenegro, and it is now the administrative capital of the district, but it is built without eloquence. Stone, which everywhere else imposes a certain rhetoric on those who build with it, can do nothing against the limitations of the Montenegrin genius, and expresses nothing but forthrightness and resistance. But there was an immense amount of human sightseeing to be done here, even in this dining-room.

As soon as we sat down, a plump elderly man, with hair artlessly dyed an incredible piano-black, rushed across the dining-room and embraced Constantine. "What are you doing so far from Belgrade?" he cried. "And you? I did not know you could breathe outside the Café Moscow," cried Constantine. A beautiful young man, who was sitting at the next table and had been staring at a letter instead of eating his trout, looked up at these metropolitan greetings, seemed to recognise both parties, and broke into bitter silent laughter. Fiercely he folded up the letter, put it into his pocket, and started on his fish. The fat man explained that he was in Podgoritsa rehearsing the local repertory company in one of his dramas. "And a very fine job they are making of it too," waving his hand in a courtly gesture; and we saw that the players were all around us, eating trout. The men sat at one table: a couple of spaniel-eyed juveniles, the *père noble* with a toupee that rode higher

and higher as he laid down the law with a wagging forefinger, and the funny man, who had the anxious face of a concerned mother and a shelving belly. The leading lady ate alone. Though she was not young she was very handsome and she had authentic glamour. That is not to say that she resembled Miss Marlene Dietrich, and announced herself poisoned by special self-generated sexual toxins, affecting the face like the heavier sorts of beer. It is to say that while she was well equipped for love and sensible of its claims, she would be far more difficult for a lover to subjugate than the most frigid spinster. For it was inconceivable that the love of a man could ever matter to her so much as the approval of an audience. No lover, therefore, could ever feel sure of her, even after he had physically possessed her; she would leave any Romeo to play Juliet. And every man could promise himself the triumph of breaking down her preoccupation and making himself more precious to her than applause.

She could not have been more attractive as she sat there, doubly dazzling with the radiance of a Slav blonde and the maquillage of her profession, which seemed to proclaim her as more accessible than other women and actually proved her less; for the black on her lashes was designed to convince not a lover within kissing distance but the man at the back of the gallery, and her complexion did not aim at freshness but at transporting into ordinary life the climate of the footlights. How little she and her kind represented pure passivity was shown by two older actresses at another table, who illustrated another phase of their being. Both were elderly, one had been very beautiful; about them was neither embitterment nor despair, only the cynicism of old foxes that had evaded the hunters a thousand times and found their holes in time. Their value, real or imagined, in the world of art had given them a refuge from all the common ills of life, had given them the power to tell any person who tried to humiliate or disappoint them that it was not to be done, that they could only be hurt by unknown people, sitting in rows. As I watched them, one said to the other, "My dear! What can you expect from such people!" Her darkened eyebrows went up, her rouged lips went down at the corners, her fine wrist turned and showed a safety-pin where a button should have been at her cuff. The sight evoked the disorder I knew would be characteristic of the rooms of all



these three women, of all women like them in every country, which would proceed not so much from slovenliness as from defiance of all conventions touching on regularity, and from refusal to spend one drop of nervous force anywhere but on the stage. I put down my knife and fork and clapped my hands, for I had thought of something pleasant that I could say to Constantine about the Germans.

It took him and his friend some time to part. The spectacle of their prolonged conversation made the young man at the next table take out the letter he had put in his pocket and tear it to pieces. It was typewritten and no doubt administrated a rebuff to some notable literary ambition; and no doubt that was a real tragedy, for there is an astonishing amount of ability in these small Slav towns. In another Montenegrin town, Nikshitch, there is published a brilliant satirical journal. At last Constantine sat down with us, smiling and panting, "You see, I have friends everywhere!" and I said, "Listen, Constantine, I have just thought of something that proves you right and me wrong!" "Aha, such news I love to hear," he cried, beaming and falling on his fish. "I have sometimes spoken ill of Goethe in your presence," I said, "and I take it all back. There is one thing he did perfectly, and he did it for all time. I remembered it as soon as I saw your friend's company waiting around him. Nobody can see actresses in any country, neither a touring company waiting at an English railway junction, nor *Comédie Française pensionnaires* rehearsing in a Roman arena, nor stars lunching at the Algonquin in New York, without thinking of one thing, and one thing only!"

"And that is?" asked Constantine. "*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*!" I said. "Yes," said Constantine. "Yes, indeed," I said happily. "Do you not remember the wonderful description of the untidiness of the lovely Mariana's bedroom? He has a superb image for the theatrical make-up and costumes that lay about, as different from what they were in use as the glittering skin of a fish cast aside by the cook in a kitchen. He catalogues the other oddments in her room, the plays and pin-cushions and hairpins and sheet-music and artificial flowers, as all united by a common element, an amalgam of powder and dust. And he describes how young Wilhelm, used to the order of his bourgeois home, was at first shocked when he had to lift aside his mistress's bodice before he could open the harpsichord,

and had to find another place for her gown if he wanted a seat, but later came to find a special charm in this chaotic housewifery." "Yes, yes," said Constantine.

"What, do you not like *Wilhelm Meister*?" I asked, for he spoke a little coldly. "Oh, yes, very much," he said. But his eyes stared over my right shoulder, returned to me, examined me without much interest, then sought space again. "He does not believe me," I thought penitently. "I have convinced him too well that I don't like Goethe." So I continued aloud, "I am sure that if you went home with the leading lady over there you would find that her room was just like Mariana's and that she herself was like Mariana and Philina, and perhaps even the serious Aurelia." "Yes, yes," said Constantine, "I think you are right." But his voice was distant as his eyes. "It is no use," I thought, "he believes I cannot really be fair to anything German. And it is he who is not being fair to me, for I can see beauty there as everywhere else." I saw the Germany which was the setting for Mariana and Philina and Aurelia, the neo-classical villas with their creamy white stucco pilasters and pediments, the lilacs and chestnuts, the fountains and the statuary that was none the worse for being none too good; and I was about to tell Constantine how much I liked that scene when my husband asked, "Constantine, why are you looking so hard at those people?"

I turned, and saw that while I had been looking at an antique Germany, Constantine had been looking in the opposite direction at the actual Germany. At a round table behind me sat eight people, four men in open shirts and leather shorts, four women in dirndlsh cotton dresses, all very fair and much overweight. "They look very harmless," I said. "You have not found the right word," answered Constantine, "for the oldest and tallest of the men is Altdorff, the chief German agent in Yugoslavia." "Well, surely he is being very harmless at the moment," I said; "he is evidently just having an outing with his friends." Constantine did not answer for a minute. Then he burst out, "I am not sure. I think he is doing more than having a Bummel with these pieces of raw meat. I believe there must be something with Albania. Why was that little one with the knickerbockers whom the monk did not trust waiting at Sveti Naum which is the Albanian frontier? Why was there that fool who said he was a Dane at Petch which is

also on the Albanian frontier? Why is this Altdorff here in Podgoritsa, which again is on the Albanian frontier? It is certain that there is trouble to come in Albania, that the Italians are to do something frightful to the Albanians, and that their friends the Germans, who do not so greatly love them, wait outside to see how it goes. I do not think you English know anything about Albania. For it is nearly Italian, they have their officials there, they control the whole country; some day they will have their army there too, and it will be as a pistol pointed at Yugoslavia." He shuddered violently and said, "Ils avancent toujours." He spoke as a Serb, as a Jew, as an inheritor of the French tradition.

Beams of sunshine, dancing with motes, struck the unstained wooden floor, the stiff coarse tablecloths, the emphasised faces and gestures of the players, who were so little confident in their natural endowment that they had brightened all that was bright and darkened all that was dark with cosmetics, who paid their kind the lovely tribute of living for their applause, the featureless, stockish spies, who were contented with their mission, who cared nothing for good opinion. There was a strong smell of fish, for all of us were eating trout. Constantine said, in a faltering voice, "My friend who is here rehearsing his play is not a true writer. He is a very rich man who would give his all to be a writer. But his plays are very, very bad, because he does not write them. He is a shrewd man of much appetites, he likes to eat and drink and to be with women, and he has so made himself much experience, and he is intelligent enough to understand what he does. But when he picks up a pen it is not himself who guides it, it is some little woman whom he has swallowed when he was yawning with his great mouth, and who now lives somewhere in him, say in his kidney, and chooses the time when he picks up a pen to have things her way. For his plays are so small, and so *fade* and so weak, they are just what a nun would write for her *pensionnaires*."

### *Lake Scutari*

For an hour that afternoon we sat on a bouldered hillside, tufted with great blue flowers and peppermint, looking down on the plains about Podgoritsa which were cut into sections,

slender as cake-slices in a genteel household, and tidily planted with maize and tobacco, apple orchards, fig trees and full-foliaged mulberry trees. A puff of dust travelling rapidly along a straight road cut through this neatness showed that my husband had left his hat in the inn at Podgoritsa and that Dragutin had gone back to fetch it. It was warm now, with a clear blue sky overhead and some white mists lying like scarves on the plain. On a little knob of rock above us a white cloud stood like a toy. I strolled about picking flowers within earshot of the two men. "There is no equivalent in English," I heard my husband say, "for the French word *banaliser*." "That shows an insensitiveness," said Constantine, "for banalisation is one of the most important processes in life. There are two sorts of banalisation, the sort that comes from below, and the sort that comes from above. The first I have recognised when I have been successful. For I have sometimes been successful, more successful than anyone else in Yugoslavia. I have written plays which were so popular that people were crushed to death going into the theatre every night. I have written novels of which nobody in Belgrade has not talked of nothing else. In those days the papers sent many reporters to interview me, and I noticed always that they would take out of my remarks all that is characteristic of me, all that had made my plays and books successful. Often I have wished to ask, 'But why do you think your editors sent you to interview me if it were not for that little thing I have which you have so cleverly removed from what I say? Do you not understand that it is precisely because I have that way of thinking and writing which is not yours that I am a favourite writer and you are a reporter?' But I did not, of course. That is why folly is immortal; wise men are too busy to correct fools.

"Then, when I found I could not write fast enough to keep my wife and children, and I became a Government official, I learned of the other kind of banalisation. For I had to write speeches for our Ministers, and I wrote them speeches which were not only good but magnificent, as nobody else in the world could have written them, great in themselves, very great, and always wonderfully appropriate to the occasion when they must be given. And to my stupefaction the Ministers altered them, everyone they altered, just in the same way as the reporters altered what I said to them. They banalised them. When the

speeches left my pen, they were wise and memorable and persuasive. When the Ministers delivered them, they were not as sensible as any grocer in a quiet little town, they must be forgotten one minute after they were heard, they would make nobody not change no opinion. Yet this kind of banalisation was not the same as the reporter's kind, though it looked the same. For that meant poverty and obscurity, this meant wealth and glory. It was something absolutely necessary to being a Minister. For sometimes a Minister came who did not alter my speeches, and who spoke them so that his audiences cheered again and again and said they would die for him; and always he fell and was disgraced. Now, that I cannot understand, that the way to be poor and the way to be rich should be the same. But here I am very comfortable, for there is nothing but the rocks and the sun."

Dragutin was a long time away; and when he came back he was as pleased as a doctor who finds that a patient he suspected of anaemia has enough red corpuscles. "There's still a lot of life in that town," he said, and with gusto showed us how a lawless Podgoritsan had attracted his attention by winking and folding back his jacket to show pockets stuffed with cigarettes that had never paid duty to the internal revenue. "Take one," said Dragutin, "they're good. Oh, they're not done, down there, by any means. But houp la! If you're to have a good look at Lake Scutari we must start now." We mounted to regions of rock washed by rain and baked by sun to surgical cleanliness. At a great cement cistern we stopped to take water for the engine and look at some girls who were sitting near by round the great trunk of a plane tree, their black and white sheep standing in the shadow. On this side of Montenegro the women have lost their Byzantine tensity and are Du Maurier duchesses, with the same numismatic profiles and uptilted, humourless dignity, and the same underlying simplicity and amiability and resolution in good behaviour. These girls needed only tie-backs and tennis rackets and little boys in sailor suits to be as familiar as any old volume of *Punch*.

"Is it not one of the world's wonders?" asked Dragutin, when a few more turns of the road took us to a view of Lake Scutari; and indeed it was among landscapes what dragons are among beasts. Through a deep fiord, a thousand feet or



FRESCO FROM DECHANI



LAKE SCUTARI

so below us, a river flowed into the lake, slowly and without confusion of the two substances, as water from a dripping tap might seep into a cask of molasses. For this lake is not water, it is mud. It was green as a horse-pond on an English common, but the substance was not so liquid. It was nearly solid; the reflections it bears were not superficial images which a breeze will confuse and annul, but photographs imposed on a sensitive jelly. The forms that were photographed followed a strictly geometric pattern. The fiord described a curve, and between its green margins the river dragged the slow snake of its trail in the same curve. The rocky world that framed the lake was hewn into triangles, great and small. The higher peaks lifted acute apices, the low hills and islands lay squat under obtuser apices. Under each of these triangles, except the high peaks, was the inverted triangle of its image, more solid, more dogged, more of a fact than reflections commonly are, because they were registered on this viscid medium. The archipelago at the mouth of the fiord looked like a fleet of overloaded ships, becalmed in a Sargasso sea; the light shone back from the lake between them a white opaque haze, as if it could not rise freely into the upper air. In this landscape there had happened to matter what happens to time when, as they say, it stands still. Mobility was not. There was this grey rock, its dwarf trees and bushes growing so low among the boulders that they were as if nailed to the mountainside; and there was this greenish jelly in which rivers and reflections and even light itself foundered and were fixed. It would have been appropriate to come on this inspissation through tropical heat, but as we looked down on it we were blown on by the freshest sort of airs, winds from the sea and the peaks. Here nature was at its most unnatural: and the scale of the scene, which was immense, as much as the eye could see from a great height, made this prodigiousness alarming. It was as if one learned that nightmares might fill not only a troubled hour after midnight but the whole of the night and the day, that a historical epoch might hold horror and nothing else. Yet it was beautiful, so beautiful that the appalled sight could not have enough of it.

"There is a child looking at us from behind those boulders," said my husband. "Say nothing and she may come nearer," said Constantine, "but we must be very cautious, here even the little ones are shy and proud." It was ten minutes before the



little girl came from cover, and then she had been joined by a friend. "Good day, little ones," called Constantine. "Please can you tell me, if that island with the two peaks is Vranina?" They would not be discourteous. They came to us, though reluctantly. Perhaps they were ten years old, and they were clad in homespun linen frocks, multi-coloured woollen stockings, and sandals with upturned toes. They carried long withies, and below them their black and dust-coloured sheep spread in a munching fan over the mountainside. One was fair and the other dark, with the fine hair about the brows and temples sunburned to honey colour. Both were beautiful, with a thorough and careful beauty that attended to everything, making marvels of such matters as the arch of the eyebrows and the indentation of the upper lip. Both were sublimely dignified. Neither their features nor their limbs sprawled. They were as proud as good people would choose to be in the sight of strangers, revealing nothing ungente and nothing too tender.

It could be seen that they were amused by the sight of Constantine. They thought that this little fat man with the animal muzzle and the tight black curls was a great joke. But they showed it not by sneering or by any breach of courtesy, but by grave fascinated smiles. They were as little princesses, trained never to fall from graciousness. A boy pushed up the hillside and stood beside them, indubitably a little prince. Another princess came, another prince. The five stood in a line of loveliness, and Constantine sat himself down on a boulder, and set himself to display the tried and potent magic he stored under those black curls, with spreading hands, pouting lips, rolling eyes, and voice that lifted and paused before the crises so that the hearers squeaked the delivering syllable. So, centuries before, one of his blood may have enchanted the market-places of ancient Asian towns. Soon the children were asking him breathless questions, sometimes they were choking with excited laughter, sometimes they made him go back and alter what he had said, because it had offended some fairy-tale convention.

I have no idea what story he told them. Usually he translated to us what passed in his wayside conversations, but this time he was too happy and spoke to us only twice. Once he spun round on his boulder and said, "They have a name for each of their sheep, very fanciful names." Then later, when another princess had scrambled up the path and joined the circle

at his feet, a little girl who held her chin as if she stood before many judges, all despised, he greeted her, and told us : " This is very interesting. Her name is Gordan, which is as if you should call a child Proud. There must be some story there, for her parents to have called their child that name." As he spoke the children watched as if they understood, nodding faintly, their eyes bright with intelligence and hooded with restraint. Plainly they admired their companion's distinction, whatever it was, and could have told the story behind her name, but would not talk of such things to strangers. So they put aside their gravity before it settled on them and clamoured to Constantine that he should go on with his story.

But the fair little princess who had been the first to come up the hillside did not give him her full attention, though at first she had been the most eager listener. She looked across at my husband and myself every now and then, with increasing uneasiness. We were not being honoured as guests should be. She tried to remedy this by giving us a sweet personal smile ; but her conscience told her that this was not enough and would not let her settle down to listen. So she went down the hillside to a patch of flowers and began picking us a proper ceremonial nosegay, of the prescribed size and variety. This was a great sacrifice, and sometimes it was too much. She would catch a burst of laughter from the circle she had left, and she would run back and join the listeners for a moment or two. But her eyes would fall on us again, and she would pick herself up and go back to her task. When she had the nosegay she thought correct, she brought it to me at a leisured pace, curtsied, and kissed my hand. For a minute I could not bear to let her go ; I put my arm round her shoulders, for to have this exquisite creature of remote and superior race so close was such luck as having a butterfly alight on one's fingers. She bore my touch with good manners, smiling straight into my eyes and giving my husband also his share of greeting, but the minute I let her go she was back in a flash at the circle round Constantine.

I went to the automobile and fetched the cakes I had brought from Kolashin ; and found Dragutin sitting on the automobile trying to teach a tortoise he had just picked up on the road to lick a piece of chocolate. " Why always grass, grass, grass ? " he was asking. I took the cakes over to Constantine, and put them under his nose so as not to interrupt him ; and instantly

they became part of his story. His eyes did not fall from the far towers and domes he was describing, his voice did not sink from the great billows which were washing heroes and giants and emperors' daughters to this mountainside. With a wizard's gesture he called the fair princess to him and handed her the cakes, bidding her give one to each of the children. "Now all of you kneel!" he ordered. They went down on their knees. "Now the first bite!" they all obeyed him. "Now the second! Now the third!"

He had told them, I think, that these were magic cakes, and that the first three bites would exempt them from some ill fortune or guarantee them some virtue, and they half disbelieved and wholly believed him. They gurgled with laughter as they ate, but between bites they eyed the cakes very solemnly; however their tongues, which knew nothing about magic, but recognised good rich pastry when they met it, shot out and licked in the crumbs, and it was taste which dominated them in the end. They sat back on their little haunches, and slowly and delicately finished the last morsels while Constantine silently watched them, his elbow on his knee, his chin on his hand. Behind their loveliness the long high vista of Lake Scutari, with its grey pyramids of rock mounting towards the noon of the sky though ooze-bound in the adhesiveness of green jelly, was earth's self-drawn ideogram, expressing its monstrosity.

### *Tsetinye I*

Underneath the mountainside a town slept beside a river which was a mirror of woodlands. It was called by its name, Riyeka, which is to say, river: or, in full, Riyeka Tcherniyevitsa, the river of the Tchernivitches, the tribe inhabiting this slope of the Montenegrin fastness. While Dragutin sought some petrol we sat under the trees on the embankment, looking about us at an unbelievable prettiness. There was an old and asymmetrical bridge of enchanting camber; along our side of the river lay rowing-boats curved like bows; on the opposite bank blossoming trees stood above their reflections. Behind us was a line of sober stone houses with handsome people sitting at open doors. In the nearest house three middle-aged women and an old one were superb. We were to notice then and later

that the female Montenegrin is better to look at as a little girl or as an ageing woman than in the period of her sexual attractiveness, for then she presents a disconcerting blankness. Her face is like a niche designed for a statue it does not hold. Perhaps this is because there is part of a mature woman's nature which must be filled by sexual love or a sublimation of it, or be sensibly empty, and the male Montenegrin has kept his liberty only by maintaining a continuous masculinist frenzy which prevents him from loving women or letting them forget lack of love in thought and work. This leaves the female Montenegrin no worse off than many women in the industrialised West whose men are bled white by invisible enemies more dangerous than the Turks, but her tragedy is made more dramatic by her marked physical appropriateness to love.

"God be thanked," said Dragutin, "I have found petrol. We can be in Tsetinye in half an hour, for it is only sixteen kilometres straight up that mountainside." But when we went to tell Constantine he was not pleased. He had fallen in with three old men who at first had taken him for an ordinary tourist and had grumbled, "This is a ruined town, all is falling into decay, we are all poor as dogs and Belgrade does nothing for us," but became more cheerful when he retorted, "Well do I know why this town is ruined, and there is nothing Belgrade can do about it, nor should, you wicked old men. For if you were rich before the war it was only because this was a frontier town, and you were all smugglers. Yes, all of you offended against the law, and I do not know that I could bring myself to speak to such people were it not that I come from Shabats, from Shabats on the river Sava, that used to be on the Serbian frontier, and there we all of us smuggled from the day we were born, and I would like to know whether you are as clever as me at packing tobacco into a shoe." By now the four of them were old cronies, and Constantine turned a desolate face on us. "We cannot yet go to Tsetinye," he said. "I must take you across the bridge, for you must see Lake Scutari from the other side, and also you must see the ruins of the monastery of Obod, where the first Slav printing-press was installed in the fifteenth century, and was destroyed by the Turks, who destroyed all, in the sixteenth century. Many religious books were published there. That, very certainly you must see." In the automobile he groaned, "Up there in Tsetinye Sava Militchevitch, my

official, is waiting for me ; up there it will be the world, it will be like Belgrade."

After we had crossed the bridge we heard no more of the monastery of Obod, and we wandered among pleasantness of a sort I had never imagined, never heard described. Beyond the bridge the river widened out into a curd of yellow water-lilies, edged with a streak of mirror at each bank, in which willow trees, standing above their exact reflections, amazed us by their shrill green and cat-o'-thousand-tails form ; they were like static fireworks. Handsome boys in uniform from a naval station rowed about, their arched boats cutting the golden cream of water-lilies with the action of an icebreaker. Beyond the river mouth Lake Scutari was more solid still than it had been in the fiord on the other side, and more bewildering : beneath hills covered with delicious woodland, emerald water-meadows met at an invisible line of marshes apparently only a shade less firm than themselves, which were impressed with a heavy and faulty image of the woodlands, like an unsuccessful colour photograph. About such shining viscous lochs we followed wandering lanes that took us past a quarry choked with honeysuckle ; a quince orchard rising in terrace upon terrace of coarse clean blossom ; a farmhouse with closed shutters of ardent blue, standing in lands trim as a stage, yet desolate and uncoupled as if they were tilled by phantoms. From that silence we looked up at a mountainside which from here was a sheer grey wall surmounted with a parapet of snow, flushed now from the west ; there Constantine had told his tale and given the cakes to the little princes and princesses, who would still be keeping their sheep among the scrub, for their day is long. "Time to go up to Tsetinye," said Dragutin. "Yes, yes," said Constantine sadly ; but he recovered his spirits on the way back to Riyeka when he started playing with the automobile radio and tuned in to Milan, for that station was broadcasting a particularly palpitant opera, and he discovered that if he turned it on at the right moments it was an effective substitute for a hooter. Astonished peasants taking home their calves or their pack-horses were hurled out of our way by soprano invocations of amore which were cut off before the obvious tryst could be kept with the tenor. "For this," said Constantine unjustly, "has Italian music been made."

We climbed the sheer mountainside and dropped over the

crest, and found Tsetinye. It lies in a stony crater like a town set inside the brainpan of an enormous skull. Its square stone houses, laid out in broad streets, are typically Montenegrin in a Puritanism that suffers no decoration save an occasional great tree; and all its horizons are edged with a breaking wave of rock, which at this hour was the colour of chill itself. A division of the Sokols, the Hawks, the patriotic gymnastic societies, was holding a congress here, and as we entered this town that looked like a Golgotha we heard the sound of several bands and had to drive slowly through crowds of beautiful young men and women in various kinds of peasant dress and uniform. For some time we could not reach the front door of our hotel because the people standing in front of it had suddenly taken it into their heads to form a great circle and dance the kolo. A moon, caught in the foliage of a great tree behind them, shone back from the windows of a large house beside the hotel, giving it an air of being no sort of habitation for the living. "That," said Constantine, "was the boarding school for young ladies which was financed by the Tsarina of Russia." There the little dears of Dalmatia and Croatia and Bosnia, imported here to be imbued with the principles of absolutism, learned to read Stepniak and Kropotkin and Gorky. I was receiving a last demonstration of the Balkan habit of making life fully visible, of gathering up diffused events into an apprehensible symbol. This bleached town, set on aridity, was the scene of innumerable futilities committed by Imperial Russia. The moon had continued to shine on it, the people had continued to dance.

After the Montenegrin vespers, when the Martinovitch brothers had purged their people of the spreading Moslem taint, Peter the Great conceived an admiration for these people. He had an eye for the quality of the South Slavs, it was to Kotor he had sent a party of his young nobles to learn seamanship. He treated Montenegro with special favour, proclaiming the Prince-Bishop Danilo as his ally "to conquer the Turk and glorify the Slav faith and name," and sending him money and gifts calculated to foster the Orthodox religion, such as missals, vestments and icons. This tradition was maintained by his successors until it was interrupted by a priggish and doctrinaire attitude of bureaucrats towards a people fighting for its life in primitive conditions. In 1760 a Russian envoy was sent

to enquire into the disposition the then Prince-Bishop Sava was making of the subsidy. This envoy was scandalised when he found that the Prince-Bishop was using his nephew, Bishop Vasili, an able politician, to dole out the money to the different tribes in such a way as to cement their loyalty to the central government; the loyal were rewarded, the troublesome had to go without. The Russian bureaucrat had an idea that the money ought to have been distributed equally among the tribes in the name of Russia, and he coldly withdrew, leaving out of account the excellent resistance the Montenegrins were making against the Turks, and advised the Empress to send them no more subsidies or gifts. Vasili went to St. Petersburg to beg for a reversal of the decision, and there he died. He was taken ill and had not a penny for his ordinary necessities or medical attention. Because he was a Bishop the Russians gave him a gorgeous funeral in St. Alexander Nevsky.

As the Russian Government had thus destroyed the mechanism by which order was maintained, the country was plunged into riot, which the Prince-Bishop Sava could not control now that he had lost Vasili. The day was saved by the emergence of a new and gifted leader, a monk named Stephen the Little who claimed that he was Tsar Peter III, Catherine the Great's husband, although that sad nonentity had been safely murdered by Orloff some years before. It is difficult to suppose that Stephen the Little's claim was believed in by the people who accepted it in anything like the strict sense of the word "believe". A monk cannot well appear in a monastery from nowhere, and indeed it is said that many recognised him as a member of a well-known Dalmatian family. Like many impostors he probably put forward his story as a symbolic expression of his inborn right to power, and though his followers would have denied that they regarded it in such a light, they showed very clearly that they were not going to abandon him if it were proved untrue.

Stephen the Little very soon showed unusual ability by restoring order among the tribes and bringing them into a united front against the Turks. But Catherine the Great was inspired to send a suite of thirty officers under Prince Dolgoruki to Montenegro on the double and inharmonious mission of denouncing Stephen the Little as a fraud and enlisting Montenegrin volunteers to fight against the Turks with the Russian

Army. They had an unenjoyable visit. When they arrived to stay with the Prince-Bishop they were appalled by the amount of rakia they were expected to drink with the monks, and by the irregularity and frugality of the meals. Then the heads of the tribes came to pay their respects, and when they were all assembled they were joined by Stephen the Little and an enthusiastic band of followers. It should be understood that Stephen the Little must have realised that Prince Dolgoruki would denounce him if he presented himself. When the denunciation was made the Montenegrins refused to shoot Stephen the Little, as the Russians suggested, but they consented to imprison him, and locked him up in a room above the quarters occupied by Prince Dolgoruki.

The troubles of the mission then began. During the next few days the Turkish forces made preparations for a fresh attack, and the Patriarch of Petch and one of his Bishops arrived at Tsetinye to beg for help against tyranny in their district; and spies came in with the news that the Turks had been delighted by the imprisonment of Stephen the Little. The Montenegrins then gathered round and pointed out how regrettable it was that they now had a Prince-Bishop, a visiting Patriarch and Bishop, a Russian prince and thirty Russian officers, and no leader. They went on to point out that Prince Dolgoruki had allowed them to imprison Stephen the Little in a room above his own, and that this was a proof that he knew the monk was of a rank superior to his own.

Incredible as it may seem, this remark has been recorded by historian after historian as a sign of Montenegrin simplicity and ignorance. Actually this was a convention respected both at Versailles and the court of the Romanoffs. For this reason the rooms above the suites of the French King and the Tsar were always left vacant. Prince Dolgoruki and his thirty officers then hastily fled down the face of Mount Lovchen to Kotor, and sailed away, leaving Stephen to share power over Montenegro with the Prince-Bishop for the next eight years, till 1774. He might have reigned much longer, for he was an excellent governor, teaching the tribes to respect life and property as never before, had he not been murdered by a barber who was sent to his monastery by the Pasha of Scutari. This crime looks as if it could be counted against the Turks, but the Pashalik of Scutari was a hereditary office held by a family of



renegade Serbs ; and it cannot even be counted against Islam, for the records of the Venetian Inquisition candidly disclose that the Inquisition sent a certain count to Montenegro with instructions to kill Stephen the Little and equipped him with a bottle of poison.

The order created by this great impostor survived him. The country was still well disciplined when the Prince-Bishop Sava died in 1782 and it was taken over by his brilliant nephew, Prince-Bishop Peter I. This man was almost as much of a prodigy as Stephen the Little, for he was as fine a soldier and as dexterous in the political work of civilising and unifying the tribes, and he had a legal mind of a high order ; he codified the law and inaugurated a judicial system. He had also the advantage of longevity, which made him able to carry his ideas into effect during a reign of forty-eight years, and win one of his most spectacular victories against the Turks at the age of seventy-three. He appealed powerfully to the imaginative mind of the Tsar Alexander I, who subsidised him handsomely in return for the use of his troops. They must have been the most disconcerting allies. There exists the horrified testimony of a Russian naval officer, who had fought beside them, a Monsieur Broniewsky. " When, at the attack of Clobuk, a little detachment of our troops was obliged to retreat, one of our officers, a man of stout habit, no longer young " —one sees him as a subsidiary character in *Eugene Onegin*— " fell to the ground from exhaustion. A Montenegrin perceived it and ran immediately to him and drew his yataghan, saying, ' You are very brave, and must wish that I should cut off your head rather than that you should fall into the hands of the enemy. So say a prayer and make the sign of the cross.' "

I could understand the feelings of that officer after we had spent the evening with Constantine's friend, Sava Militchevitch, who came out and claimed us, as we stood watching the kolo sway and pause and beat out a rhythm and pause again, dusted like the ground it danced on with the fine white powder of the moonlight. Sava was cast in the handsome Montenegrin mould, and his character was plainly as noble as his appearance, but I could not dismiss a suspicion that in certain circumstances he might invite me to say a prayer and make the sign of the cross in order that he might cut my head off, and that he would be inspired by such exalted sentiments it would be unthinkable

to resist them. Over dinner he conversed in French and Italian, and revealed himself as spiritual brother to the nicest kind of don; he would have fitted very well into Oxford or Princeton. But he was heroic, he was classical. He offered to step into our modern and minor world, since he knew we were at ease there, but his heart was hardly able to carry his offer.

This attitude was pervasive; it touched the whole of life, yet sprang strong and undeflected from the small confines of his people's customs. It appeared at once when he handed us our mail, and I found in my packet a letter from my mother-in-law over which I groaned, for the reason that her handwriting has every good quality except legibility. Sava was visibly shocked, and was not really soothed when I explained that I was groaning because of my impatience to read the letter which was sure to be sensible and humorous. He would have liked it better if I had begun my married life by extravagant rites of prostration before my mother-in-law which would have taught me to regard her as a representative of Demeter and to take what she gave me in the way of handwriting or anything else. Later, when he heard that I had received the Order of St. Sava for lecturing in Yugoslavia, he said to my husband, "And you, did you not get anything? Here in Montenegro we men would not be content if our wives were given something and we did not have it too." Though he laughed at himself, it was obvious that he felt that there was really something a little ridiculous about a husband whose wife had a distinction he had not, even if his own distinctions were far greater. A man should have everything, because he is a hero, because he is half divine in his courage, and because there must be a predestined attraction between him and the fruits of the earth if his lot is not to be intolerably uncertain. The theory would be invalidated if women were allowed to draw to themselves a single fruit, for though women may be heroic it is only as amateurs, they are never dedicated, full-time professionals. But as compensation the bountiful male will accord the female the last degree of respect and protection, and Sava spoke of the Montenegrin women as if they were so many saints, for all of whom and each of whom he would have given his life.

This was not merely talk. It could be taken for granted that this man had no timidity, as it can be taken for granted that most of us Westerners have much of it. This, of course,

was not to the point, for what women want is not individual protection but a high standard of civil order, and the two things are not completely harmonious. That we realised when my husband asked whether Montenegrin peasant costume, with its wealth of gold and silver and silk braid, was expensive, and Sava told him that it represented a heavy tax on a poverty-stricken people, for the suit alone cost thirty pounds, and there were many accessories, including a rifle. "Does one have to take out a licence to carry a rifle?" asked my husband. "Yes," answered Sava, "of course one has to take out a licence if one is going to carry a rifle, as in any other civilised state, but not if one is wearing our national costume." "Surely that defeats the whole idea of a gun licence," said my husband. "But we are a military people," said Sava, "how could we have a national costume that did not include a rifle?"

Among my husband's mail was a telegram asking him to be in Budapest three days earlier than we had planned, and we were discussing the changes this involved when Constantine suddenly said, "Is that not the German Minister from Albania sitting over there?" "Yes," said Sava, "he arrived this afternoon." "Why is that?" asked Constantine. "I have no idea," said Sava; "perhaps he is on his way home for a holiday." "Has anything happened in Albania?" asked Constantine. "I haven't heard so," said Sava, "and certainly there is nothing in the papers." "But there must be something happening in Albania!" exclaimed Constantine, and he pushed his plate away from him, and held his forehead between his hands. He told Sava about the German agents we had seen at Sveti Naum and Petch and Podgoritsa, and Sava groaned. "I cannot believe that has happened to the Italians, whom I learned to love when I was a student in Rome. That they should do such things, and that they should be in league with the Germans, that is an offence against nature."

They sat in uneasy silence for an instant and Constantine said, "You do not see anybody else here who has come from Albania?" Sava looked round the room and shook his head. "Then you must ask the German Minister what has happened," said Constantine. "That I cannot do!" exclaimed Sava indignantly. "You can do it very easily," said Constantine; "you are an official here, you can easily present yourself to him and ask if there is anything you can do for him."

And then, quite easily, as you turn away, you can say, 'By the way, there are rumours that there is'—oh, anything will do!—'a revolution in Albania'." "No, that I cannot do," said Sava. "But why not?" asked Constantine. "He might refuse to tell me," said Sava. "And what would that matter?" said Constantine, growing red. "Then we are no worse off than we were before." "And I," said Sava, growing white, "am I not worse off, if I ask a man a question and he humiliates me by not answering?" "No, you are not, not by a dinar," said Constantine. The two men glared at each other, and Constantine gave a shrug of resignation. "Very well, we shall not know till to-morrow what it is, this threat to our country," he said, and we fell to talking of our plans for the next day. We resolved to see what we could do to-day in the morning, go down for lunch and a bathe at the sea-coast town of Budva below us, catch a boat at Kotor in the afternoon, and land at Dubrovnik late at night.

That night I said to my husband, "How strange it was to see those two men each thinking that if everybody behaved like the other the world would simply have to stop." "Yes," said my husband, "Sava Militchevitch thought that if men went about unarmed, putting themselves at a disadvantage before strangers, they would never be able to defend themselves. Constantine thought that if men did not use all means to discover what their enemies were doing they would never be able to defend themselves. Dignity was everything to the one, understanding was everything to the other." Five minutes after his voice spoke out of the darkness again, very sleepily now, "Sava's attitude reminded me of something that happened on the mountainside when we were leaving those children. I do not think you saw this, you were too busy trying to convince Dragutin that the tortoise's bowels would immediately act if it was carried in an automobile. By the way, what curious things you know. What happened was that Constantine gave the remaining cakes to the little fair princess and told her to distribute them among the other children. But there were six children and only four cakes. They would have to be divided, and that entailed an admission that they wanted those cakes, that they would care if the division was unequal. To have one's mouth water for pastry, to feel like crying if one does not get it; these are not the grand classical emotions. So the little

princess took the cakes and set them aside till we should be gone." Later he spoke again. "It is such a pity you do not read Greek." "I am too old for that now," I said, "but why does that distress you at this moment?" "The little princess's action," he said, and then stopped for drowsiness, but pushed himself on to finish, "The little princess's action when she put away the cakes was lovely not only for what it meant but for what it was. Exactly similar movements must have been made a million million million times since the world began, yet the thrust of her arm seemed absolutely fresh. Well, it is so in the *Iliad*. When one reads of a man drawing a bow or raising a shield it is as if the dew of the world's morning lay undisturbed on what he did. The primal stuff of humanity is very attractive."

### *Tsetinye II*

In the morning Tsetinye seemed even stranger than it had the night before. What earth lies round the town is richly fertile, and nourishes tall trees, green grass, and upstanding crops under the abundant rainfall. But there is hardly any earth, the fields are tiny, and all the rest of the countryside is porous rock that holds water no better than a sieve. It lies bone-dry not only under the sunshine but under the rain. A matching peculiarity of its inhabitants is their inability to accept this landscape although they are native to it. Few of them have travelled, but they all know that there is something unusual in the elevation and the bleakness of Montenegro. There still stands in the town the old Episcopal Palace, which is probably unique among the episcopal palaces of the world in being known to the population only as "Billiards"; this was because in the eighteen-thirties the Prince-Bishop Peter II had had a billiard-table brought up the mule track from Kotor, and it was a great wonder. In a room attached to this palace some Italian prisoners of war made a giant relief map under the direction of the Austrian Staff geographers, which Sava Militchevitch showed to us with a sense of the prodigiousness of its frenetic contours that would have been more natural in an English Fenlander. This surprise the Montenegrins constantly express concerning Montenegro suggests that they have retained a traditional memory of their homes on the plains and valleys of the Serbian Empire.

Beside the Billiards is the monastery of Tsetinye, a fifteenth-century building to which restoration in the late seventeenth century had given the sturdy secular look characteristic of Montenegrin ecclesiastical architecture. On a rock above it were the ruins of a round tower, which I recognised as the occasion of the distress felt by an Englishman named Sir Gardner Wilkinson when he came here to visit the Prince-Bishop Peter II. When Peter I, the great law-giver, died in 1830 after a reign of forty-eight years, he was succeeded by one of the most interesting monarchs who ever occupied a European throne. He had been educated in this monastery at Tsetinye, then at the monastery of Savina down on the Adriatic shore, where Alexander of Yugoslavia tolled his own passing bell when he was on his way to his assassination at Marseilles, and later he was tutored by a Serbian poet named Milutinovitch. It is part of the common babble of historians that Orthodox monasteries were dens of ignorance, superstition and debauchery, and that the Serbs were a nation of pig-drivers. Peter II spoke German, French, Latin and Russian, and learned the literatures of each language; he was an admirable administrator and jurist; he was a student of philosophy, and was deeply instructed in mysticism; he wrote, among much other verse, *The Discovery of the Microcosm*, which is one of the great metaphysical poems of the world. At this time the English throne was occupied by King William IV. Peter II left his country only once, to be ordained as Bishop and accepted as an ally in St. Petersburg. But he often received foreign visitors, who were immensely impressed by his picturesque appearance. He was marvellously beautiful, in a style more delicate than is common among Montenegrins, with long black hair and black beard and a pale face; his voice was noticeably sweet; he was six foot eight inches in height. He wore a red fez, which was the habit of all his people in those days, a scarlet pelisse bordered with fur, a white coat, full blue breeches, a scarlet sash bristling with weapons, white stockings and Turkish slippers. He also, very oddly, wore a flowing black tie, after the fashion of the French Romantic poets, by whom he was greatly influenced, and black kid gloves.

The foreign visitor whom he would have most liked to entertain was Lamartine, for whose works he felt a passionate admiration. But he had to put up with less illustrious guests,

who, when they were British, usually displayed the utmost courage in reaching their destination, but lacked both the intelligence and the information to discover anything of interest when they got there. In *Blackwood's Magazine* for January 1845, beside a review of Monsieur Alexandre Dumas' new success, *The Three Musketeers*, an English officer and his wife record a visit they paid to the Prince-Bishop when he was commanding his army on the islands beyond Riyeka on Lake Scutari. Their journey must really have been terrifying ; but the Montenegrins, who were such thoroughly professional soldiers, albeit of a specialised sort, that they could not practise any other profession, struck them as " amateur soldiers ", and they suspected that Peter II was only waiting till he had saved enough of his apanage to run away to some more civilised country. Sir Gardner Wilkinson was better than this, but he must have been irritating enough to his host. He thoroughly appreciated Peter II's gifts from his favourite trick of shooting a lemon thrown into the air by one of his attendants (" a singular accomplishment for a Bishop," he thought) to his administrative ability ; but he was scandalised by this round tower beside the monastery of Tsetinye, because it was stuck with the heads of Turks fixed on stakes and surrounded by a welter of skulls.

" The face of one young man," wrote Sir Gardner, " was remarkable ; and the contraction of the upper lip, exposing a row of white teeth, conveyed an expression of horror, which seemed to show that he had suffered much, either from fright or pain, at the moment of death." The sight distressed him enormously ; and indeed it was a terrible proof of the demoralisation wrought by the presence of the Turks in Europe. He remonstrated with Peter II, who wearily told him that nothing could be done. If the Montenegrins ceased to pay out the Turks in their own coin, the Turks would think they were weakening and would invade them. He might also have pointed out that the Montenegrins were constantly obliged to cut off the heads of their fellow-countrymen who were wounded on the field of battle lest the Turks should find them alive and torture and mutilate them : and that they could hardly be blamed if they did to the Turks what the Turks had often forced them to do to their own kind.

Sir Gardner, deeply shocked, went off to Herzegovina and, when calling on the Vizier of Mostar in his palace, was still

more shocked to find beside it a round tower which was stuck with the heads of Montenegrins. He tried remonstrances there also, but the Vizier said he could do nothing, since the Montenegrins were so extraordinarily cruel to the poor Turks, who never did anybody any harm. Sir Gardner then proposed that he should declare a truce and hold a conference with Peter II, but the Vizier declined on the ground that all members of the Orthodox Church were cheats; however, he promised that if Montenegrins would stop cutting off the Turks' heads then the Turks would stop cutting off the Montenegrins' heads. This convinced Sir Gardner, who wrote to poor Peter II telling him that the Vizier was a very nice man and was anxious to arrive at a humanitarian agreement regarding this abuse. Peter II cannot have engaged in this correspondence with any zest, for he could not hope that a family should twice have such a success as his uncle Peter I had enjoyed, when Napoleon's Marshal Marmont had rebuked him on the same subject and he had replied, "It is surprising that you should find this practice shocking, since you French cut off the heads of your King and Queen." He contented himself in replying that the Vizier of Mostar was in fact not a very nice man and was unlikely to be moved by humanitarian considerations, since he was notorious for his cruelties and had often impaled living men. There was no remedy, he said, but to drive the Turks out of Europe.

Peter II died at forty-seven, an absurdly early age for a Montenegrin to die a natural death. But he was phthisical, perhaps for literary reasons. For his tutor, the Serbian poet Milutinovitch, had lived in Germany and had been profoundly affected by the Romantics. From them he had acquired a belief in the elevating influence of storms, and he had been in the habit of taking his infatuated pupil during his delicate adolescent years across the mountains in drenching rain and storm, in order to bring him into relation with the Sublime. In any case, poor Peter II must have been fatigued by his destiny. It cannot be easy to be a beautiful giant, with a poetic genius of the Miltonic sort and a nature saintly in its sweetness, and to be obliged to live as chief of a nation of noble savages forced to wrangle barbarously for every sippet of civilisation, with a moral enigma gnawing at the roots of both his religion and his national faith. If civilisation were



worth fighting for, why was the Western civilised world so indifferent to the tragedy of his people and so friendly to their oppressors ?

It is not surprising that with Peter II the reigning dynasty lost the full force of its moral passion. Since the great Prince-Bishop Danilo I, who had sent the Martinovitch brothers out on their terrible errand, his office had been hereditary, descending from an uncle to a nephew, or some member of the same family whom he adopted as his nephew, all parties taking monastic vows. Peter's nephew, Prince Danilo, refused the latter condition, for he had arranged to marry a beautiful and well-educated Dalmatian Serb, but he quite rightly thought himself a proper governor for the people. So he changed the constitution and gave all ecclesiastical power to the Metropolitan of Tsetinye and all the secular power to himself as a hereditary absolute prince. Thereupon he brought upon himself a long nightmare by his courageous and far-seeing conduct of foreign affairs. He supported Prince Alexander Karageorgevitch of Serbia—Karageorge's mild son who came to the throne after Milosh and Michael Obrenovitch had been driven out of the country—in his policy of neutrality, of evasive refusals to be entangled in the intrigues of the Great Powers. This was not easy ; neither he nor Alexander Karageorgevitch could resist foreign attempts to drag them into war against their own interests without exposing themselves to humiliations which their subjects bitterly resented.

Danilo would not give Russia aid against Turkey in the Crimean War, because he feared that if he did the Turks would launch a more serious attack on Montenegro than ever before. Since his subjects loved Russia, this left him in the position of a ship's captain with a mutinous crew. But equally he would not be the creature of Austria, who in revenge continually plotted against him. In 1858 his policy seemed to have failed, for the Turks, unmindful of the benefits of Montenegrin neutrality in the Crimean War, attacked his country ; but Danilo, who had been training his country on Western lines, smashed the invading army to pieces at the battle of Grahovo. The next year he lost his Serbian collaborator and got a better one ; Alexander Karageorgevitch was deposed, and after Milosh Obrenovitch had filled his place for a little he was succeeded by his son Michael, now recognisably a genius.

There is no knowing what the two brilliant men might have done for the South Slav people, had not both of them been destroyed by assassins.

In the summer of 1861 Prince Danilo's wife, the Dalmatian Darinka, was ordered sea-bathing by her doctor, and went down to spend some time at Kotor. Her husband insisted on going with her, though his counsellors warned him that his safety on Austrian soil could not be guaranteed. On fine evenings the society of Kotor used to gather in a little public garden on the seashore where a band played, and the Princess liked to frequent these minuscule entertainments, and then be rowed back to her villa. One night Danilo was handing his wife into the boat when a shot rang out and he fell dead. A Montenegrin had fired a pistol into his back. "The murderer," said Sava, who was leading us through the wide, unsecretive, banal streets of Tsetinye towards its centre, "was a man whose wife had been seduced by Prince Danilo."

"Surely not," said my husband, very firmly. "Why do you think that?" said Sava in surprise. "Have you heard otherwise?" "No," said my husband, "but I have never been in a country where every point was so thoroughly overlooked. Prince Danilo could not have taken this woman to the woods round Kolashin, for in his reign that was perpetually the scene of military activities. He certainly could not have seen her clandestinely in Tsetinye, which I suppose had a population of something like four or five thousand inhabitants, all with their attention fixed on the Prince. Every ledge in the valleys is as exposed as the shelf of a china cupboard. I should think that the only spots in Montenegro where a man and a woman could meet unobserved would be the extreme tops of the mountains, which I understand are covered with snow and ice in the winter-time and infested with snakes in summer-time. An obscure peasant might surmount these difficulties, but not a prince."

"Nevertheless," said Sava coldly, "it is known that it was so. The wife of this man had been expelled by her tribe, and we know now that it was for that reason." "Was that," said my husband, "what you did to unfaithful wives in Montenegro?" "Yes, indeed," said Sava with solemn gust. "We drove, and still drive, them out of their homes." We had observed him to be one of the kindest people in the world in

all his human relations, adored by his relatives and his secretary and his servant. "And in early times, she would have been stoned." "That I find very curious," said my husband, "for it was really a terrible punishment to turn a woman loose in this country, where every plot of earth is accounted for, and every human being has a niche. It is like turning Hagar into the desert. And I would have thought there was no need for such harshness here, since your women are obviously of a type that feels no impulse towards looseness. They would find unchastity far more of a strain and effort than chastity." My husband said this without guile, but he had faced our host with a disagreeable dilemma. For Sava wanted at one and the same time to agree with him that Montenegrin women were innately and unalterably pure, and to maintain that Montenegrins were performing a sacred duty by protecting their hearthstones from a possible taint.

His handsome face clouded, he went on to other things. "It is interesting," he said, "to know how carefully this man prepared his vengeance. For he left Montenegro, he went to the Greek islands and earned his living as a fisherman, and then came back to Kotor; and as all the Greek sailors spoke of him as one of themselves nobody there realised he was a Montenegrin, so he was able quite easily to approach Prince Danilo when the day came." "That is very strange," said my husband, who sometimes resembles a dog which has become quite certain that there is something buried beneath a rosebed, "for surely if a Montenegrin believed that his ruler had seduced his wife he could have shot him anywhere except actually in Tsetinye, and gone scot-free." To this Sava answered nothing, and we found afterwards that we had touched on a dubious point in his national history. There had been at this time a group of Montenegrin exiles who had revolted against Danilo's imposition on the tribes of a new legal code, very harsh on brigandage and the blood feud, and had taken refuge in Zara, the capital of Austrian Dalmatia. It is certain that the assassin belonged to their party. They existed on pensions paid them by the Austrian Government, and Danilo had refused submission to Austria; and it is to be remembered that seven years later Prince Michael of Serbia, who had also earned Austrian disfavour, fell as the result of what was most improbably said to be a Karageorgevitch plot. It is to avoid distressing speculations that Montenegrins prefer

to tell this story, implausible as the plot of an opera, about a wronged husband wandering round the Greek islands for years in preparation for a revenge he could have executed on his doorstep.

In this tragedy can be seen the touch that the great powers were to lay on the Balkans from the middle of the nineteenth century: which can be rightly termed corruption, which was bad when it plunged a knife in a good man's back, which was worse when it changed warrior peasants dowered with rather more of the medieval virtues than the medieval vices into panders who procured their own people for their Western paymasters. That depraving process is commemorated in a big bare villa that still stands in Tsetinye, alarming in the contrast of its mean yet grandiose design to the stately and severe and ramshackle houses with their pine shingles which are characteristic of Montenegro, for nothing could be more alarming than the attempt of a primitive society to adapt itself to the standards of another society so far advanced as to be decadent. This was the palace of Nicholas, the last ruler of Montenegro before its absorption, who was first its prince and then its self-elevated king. He was Danilo's nephew, the son of his brother Mirko, a man with a fine reputation as a general and an unpleasant one as a miser; he inherited the throne because Danilo's only child was a daughter. In him there survived a great deal of the family ability and not a particle of its moral passion. He was that most disagreeable and embarrassing kind of eccentric, he was a conscious buffoon. He liked to behave so grotesquely that he compelled people to laugh at him, and then he laughed at them behind his hand for having been so easy to deceive: so that there was no good feeling anywhere, only jeers and sniggers.

Nicholas was a man of culture. He was educated in Paris and spoke French, German, Italian, Russian and some English; and he had considerable literary talent. He was so good a soldier that though the Turks took advantage of the consternation caused by Danilo's death to seize much of the most fertile land in his kingdom, he had driven them out and acquired a great deal of Turkish territory by the time he had been twenty years on the throne, and at the end of the Balkan wars had doubled the size of his kingdom. He was also a skilful politician, who could not only steer his people through most difficult transitional periods but hold his own with European statesmen

such as Disraeli and Gladstone. But to have his ignoble joke at the expense of Europe he assumed the role of boastful and cunning and unscrupulous peasant. He pretended to a boorish simplicity which was immeasurably inferior to the general manners of his subjects and an unnatural decline from the famous charm of his grand-uncle Peter II. He also affected to approach diplomacy in the spirit of a farmer playing off the cattle dealers one against the other at a market. It was as if his conscience made him want to sacrifice by indecorous outward behaviour the public respect he knew he deserved to forfeit for his secret relations with the great powers.

These relations were revolting. He lived, and lived well, on subsidies from Turkey, Austria, Italy and Russia. With a leer he proclaimed, "Ich bin ein alter Fechter." *Fechter* means "fighter" but is old-fashioned German slang for "borrower". But his subjects, cut to the bone by their poverty, never profited; and he sucked out of them what marrow he could get. When there was a famine and Russia sent him gifts of grain for his starving people, he did not distribute it amongst them, he sold it to such as could buy. When he took the Albanian town of Scutari in 1913, after twenty thousand of his soldiers had poured out their lives before it in a seven months' siege, he surrendered it again, after he had had time to make a fortune by speculating on the Viennese bourse in the light of his foreknowledge. After putting himself up to auction by the great powers, he came to the conclusion that the financial inducements offered by Austria were the most satisfactory, and in her service he sterilised his people. Though he had been educated abroad, and his family had always been conscious of the value of foreign travel, he refused passports to all but a few privileged families. As far as was possible he kept his subjects as mindless fighting-cocks, troops that could be promised to one power if there was a chance of screwing up another power to a bigger subsidy. So completely did he demoralise them that when they conquered Petch and Prizren and Dyjakovitsa in the Balkan wars they were quite unable to administer them. There simply were not enough literate men in Montenegro. Yet enough foreign money had poured into the country to give every man and woman a good schooling. It is peculiarly ironical that Nicholas was noble and romantic in appearance, and looked like the genial father of his people. In the stationers' shops in most Southern Adriatic

towns there can still be bought postcards showing King Nicholas with his stately queen on his arm, walking like Jupiter and Juno through the garlanded streets, with the Montenegrin men in their white full-skirted coats and the women in their black boleros and white robes bowing and curtsying like submissive children.

His reign mounted to peak upon peak of treachery. In 1914, when he had been fifty-three years on the throne, he telegraphed to Belgrade as soon as the war had broken out, and promised King Peter Karageorgevitch that he and his subjects would stand by Serbia till death. When the Serbian and Montenegrin troops jointly invaded Bosnia, they were more successful than they had hoped, and soon were sweeping down on Sarajevo. Just when it seemed inevitable that the town must fall into their hands Nicholas withdrew his army without notice, and the Serbians were obliged to retreat. In the following year when the Serbian armies had to abandon their country and make their way to the sea across the mountains a royal order was issued to the Montenegrin Army and police commanding them to prevent the population giving or selling any food to the starving soldiers. In January 1916 Mount Lovchen was handed over to the Austrians by Nicholas's son, Prince Peter, and his father manœuvred his own army, which numbered fifty thousand troops, into a position where they were bound to be seized by the Austrians, and himself left his country. Relations had gone wrong between himself and the Austrians, but he had betrayed his soldiers to them all the same, because he was afraid that if they escaped to Corfu like the Serbs they would dethrone him. He then fled to France, and was allowed to remain there by the authorities, more because they wanted to keep an eye on him than for any other reason; and Montenegro was overrun by the Austrians, who brought death and famine and misery to every crevice of it. When it was proposed that it should be re-occupied on the same system as Belgium, Nicholas objected. "Let them wait," he said, "and when the moment comes for my return, I will go back with large supplies and be most popular." It was at this time that the woman we met on the hillside was in a concentration camp watching her daughter die.

We had arranged to meet Constantine outside the palace, but he was not here; and it was most unpleasant to wait for him by this commemoration of a uniquely ugly node in Slav history,

when it was probable that he was late because he was trying to find out the news from Albania, which also was probably not a fair word spoken by destiny. "Come across the road," said Sava, "and see the house where Alexander of Yugoslavia was born." It is a roomy building, which is something less harsh and strained than most Montenegrin houses. Perhaps it was inspired by a recollection of the easier Serbian farmhouses that look out on long grass and not an infinity of rock, for it was built by Peter Karageorgevitch before he was King of Serbia, when he came here in 1883 to organise the Montenegrin Army. It happened that Nicholas had married a very beautiful woman, member of a tribe famous for its intelligence and pride; and her brother, Vukotitch, was much beloved in Montenegro for his public spirit and financial integrity. By his wife Nicholas had several beautiful daughters whom he planted all over Europe to suit his foreign policy. One became the Queen of Italy, and led a distressing life. Because this goddess, accustomed to the classically beautiful costume of her nation, looked awkward in hats the size of tea-trays and dresses that cut her in two with high petersham belts, she was regarded as inherently barbarian and vulgar. Another one was married to an Austrian aristocrat, two to Russian Grand Dukes, and there was one Zorka, who was given to Peter Karageorgevitch, for no more amiable reason than to weaken the prestige of the Obrenovitches and thus cause trouble in Serbia.

He built this house for her, just over the way from her father's palace. It is now the club for the garrison officers; and Serb and Croat boys, solemn with Slav militarism, pressed against the wall so that we could climb the stairs and see the room where Princess Zorka, hardly older than themselves, had borne her children and had died. It was a long, low room with three windows looking on the foliage of the trees which line this cul-de-sac of perished royalty. So long as it was summer and the leaves hid the palace anybody in this room might think that they were in the country. It can be imagined that a woman with a good husband, as Peter certainly was in his sober and grizzled way, might enjoy lying here, suffering birth pains cancelled by their usefulness; and it is even a little terrifying to compute how much she gained by dying young.

Of the five children she bore in this room three survived. The eldest, George, has sat in darkness these many years.

Yelena married the Grand Duke Constantine, and saw him murdered by the Bolsheviks, fell out with her family, and is an exile. Alexander of Yugoslavia was murdered at Marseilles. Those tragedies, however, she could have perhaps supported. On the wall hang photographs of her which show the heroic mould. She would have found it more difficult to endure the petty nastiness that emanated from her father, such as the bomb scandal of 1907. By that time her husband Peter Karageorgevitch had come to the Serbian throne, had made a success of his kingdom and had therefore become the object of Nicholas's envy. This fitted in well with Austrian plans; for Austria intended to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina before many more years had passed, and would be able to do that with a free hand were Europe persuaded that Belgrade was a centre of crime and corruption, quite unfit to be trusted with fresh territory. Also she wanted to deprive Serbia of a possible useful ally by weakening the brotherly love felt for her by the Montenegrin common people. It happened therefore that Nicholas announced himself to be the victim of a bomb conspiracy.

The bombs certainly existed. They were sent in ordinary portmanteaux to two different frontier stations where, as even the naïvest conspirator might have foreseen, they were discovered by the customs officials. Their whereabouts had been reported by a person called Nastitch, which is an appropriate name for an unpleasant Slav. This creature gives terrible evidence of the degradation that had been wrought in such inhabitants of the Balkans as were not heroes by their dependency on the great powers. His grandfather had spied on his fellow-Serbs for the Turks; his father had spied on his fellow-Serbs and Croats for the Austro-Hungarian Government of Bosnia; he himself spied on his fellow-Serbs, Croats and Montenegrins first for the Bosnian Government then for the Austrian Foreign Office. The most respectable action ascribed to him was the theft of a pair of opera-glasses in the Vienna Opera-house. He was concerned in the notorious Zagreb high-treason trial; there he furnished Dr. Heinrich Friedjung, the anti-Slav Austrian historian, with evidence which the Professor, being an honest man, later found himself obliged to denounce as forgeries. He was responsible for a great many other cases, particularly in Sarajevo, which meant imprisonment and death for Slavs of high character. It was this Nastitch who discovered that



bombs were being sent to a body of disloyal Montenegrins, who meant to use them for blowing up King Nicholas and his palace, by his grandson, Prince George of Serbia, Peter Karageorgevitch's elder son. This was, of course, flagrant nonsense. Prince George was already recognised by his family as eccentric and was strictly supervised, and just at this time his sister, *Yelena*, to whom he was greatly devoted, was staying with her grandfather. But the conspiracy served its purpose. It added to the ill-fame of Belgrade and the Karageorgevitches, and made Austria a more generous paymaster; also it enabled Nicholas to murder a number of Montenegrins and to imprison many more. Two of them had lain in the graves we saw by the roadside outside Andrijevitsa.

We left this modest and tragic house and walked up and down the blanched street outside the palace, the stench of nineteenth-century Europe strong in our nostrils. It was the gangrened corpse of Austria that had infected Montenegro; and it appeared that Montenegro had taken its revenge on another member of the imperial breed. "It is strange to think that out of our palace, which I must own is not very big or very grand, came the ruin of Russia. Did you not know? King Nicholas's eldest daughter, *Militsa*, became the wife of the Grand Duke Michael, and as she got older she became very much interested in the *coulisses* of religion, any monk or priest who pretended to have something new in the way of visions and miracles. Because of this known taste of hers somebody brought her Rasputin, and it was she and her sister, the Grand Duchess Anastasia, who took him to the Tsarina. This is particularly strange, because our women are usually very sensible. But let us go into the palace; it is a museum now, and though there is nothing there of any importance it is at least one way of spending the time that we are obliged to spend waiting for Monsieur Constantine."

It was certainly a distraction, but, like all this hour, most mortuary. For immediately we entered the palace we were reminded of the dissolution of yet a third empire, not by a stench, a ghostly echo of idiocy, but by a fragrance. It happens that the system of provinces or *banovinas* which King Alexander devised put Tsetinye under the central control of Sarajevo, where the Moslem political party has great influence; and so it happens that the State Museum of Montenegro, which is

chiefly occupied by the records of five centuries of warfare against the Turks, is under the care of a Turk who follows his faith and wears the fez. He is not a Bosnian Moslem, but a true Ottoman Turk. This is taken ill by many Montenegrins, as an affront to their past ; but it is objectionable on quite another score. A Turkish gentleman is not a trophy that should be exhibited in public. Far more merciful would it be to keep up the old local custom and prick the round tower on the hill above the monastery with a few Moslem heads on stakes.

Superficially all was well with him ; plump and dimpled, he conducted us round the museum in a spirit of pure and un-aggressive courtesy, talking that Oriental French which is as sweet as rose-leaf jam. But all his movements showed a perfect adaptation to a system that was not there, that did not exist either to be served by him or to reward him. The palace dining-room now houses Nicholas's collection of Oriental and Occidental arms, which is extremely extensive, for the reason that the trade route from Dubrovnik to Constantinople passed through Montenegro, and Montenegrins often chose to take their fee for services rendered to travellers in the shape of a formidable new weapon. Now feeling the temper of a yataghan, now demonstrating the primitive yet ingenious loading device of an early rifle, the fezzed curator moved along these arms with a pride and leisured delight in a mastered technique which was exquisitely relevant to a particular phase in individualistic warfare, when a man had to rely on his horse, his smith and his courage. Since the phase was over it was relevant to nothing, absolutely nothing.

It would be easy to dispute that, to argue that since an aviator has to rely on his plane, his mechanic and his courage, there were some bridges between that age and to-day. But no part of the aviator's life is leisured, he knows nothing of the Turkish counterpoise between fanaticism and relaxation, between sluttishness and elegance. An Air Marshal grown old would have no sort of resemblance to a pasha rounding to the hour of his assumption to Mahommed's paradise. There would be more in the Westerner's face, and less. There was no end to the evidence that the Turk's spiritual universe had perished. At his elbow, as he caressed a sword-blade, was a death mask taken from a pasha's head that had come to Montenegro without his body. It looked strangely un-Asiatic, if I had been told that

it represented Louis Napoleon I would have believed it ; and indeed this pasha had been no Turk but a Pole, moved to fight for Turkey for no other reason than that she was the enemy of Poland's oppressor, Russia. In the old days the Turks had delighted, and been inspired by that delight, to create one of the best secret services the world has ever seen, in order to turn to their own advantage the mutual hatreds of the Christians, which always seemed to them ridiculous because there ran through them the silly gold thread of a desire for peace, a preference for harmony. But now if such a secret service still existed, it would have found Christian hatreds of a different and coarser sort, not so easily to be exploited by cynicism because they were cynical themselves, and the authority to which it reported would be irritating in its indifference to finesse, its concentration on economic and financial matters far beneath the dignity of a people which scorned commerce.

The curator was as heart-rending a spectacle when he took us upstairs to what had been the private apartments of the royal family, period pieces enchanting in themselves but misleading to the historian ; for I am told by a servant who had worked in the palace that it presented a very different appearance when the King lived there, that most of his household goods were sent away when he left, and that much of the furniture we saw were presents from foreign royalties which he had never used. But as it is it presents some delicious moments. Vast Polar bear rugs lie on the floor of a drawing-room decorated in an ingenuous shade of blue, and embroidered chairs reiterate the letter N, which stood for Nicholas as well as Napoleon, and on the walls, indubitably genuine, hang the portraits of the family and their royal contemporaries, mostly photographs faded to the palest possible brown, the colour of chicken broth, or pictures in which the artist had attempted to render with photographic accuracy the textiles in which their sitters were arrayed, particularly if they were shiny. It was on this unpromising material that the curator brought to bear his Turkish sensuousness, which is so simple that it appears to us perverse.

" Regardez la pluche ! " he said before the pictures, making no secret of it that his mouth was watering. " Le satin ! la fourrure ! les bel-les fem-mes ! " And before the faded photographs he mouthed the titles, " Son altesse le Prince, sa majesté la Reine Impératrice," and made each of them a sultan or a

sultana, reclining on silken cushions under golden domes. Being Western and therefore obsessed with the secondary meaning, we wondered, "What dreams have these substances and ranks evoked in this Turk that he is so enraptured?" But we were wrong. He was enraptured simply because plush has a deep pile, because satin gives back the light, because fur is soft and warm, because jewels flash coloured fires, because beautiful women are beautiful and women, and it is better to be a prince and an empress than to be a slave; and it was proof of his amiability that he was putting forth a special effort to feel such raptures in this room, because it had once been dedicated to pomp and elegance, although the dedication had not been very successful. But here he was showing himself true to his race, for Turks will gather in any little coffee-house that claims neighbourhood to some natural beauty, say a grove or a cascade, be it the very meanest of its sort, a few leggy trees or a trickle of water, and they will deliberately fall into a mood of delight over the alleged pleasantness. It would be detestable to find one's people abandoning such a talent and striving like the mad weak Westerners to investigate and analyse, to follow a trail that can lead to all sorts of unpleasantness such as mental exertion. There was some heroism in continuing to practise this talent, even though the portraits which could now be its only objects were alike in ghostliness, whether they were faded photographs or too highly coloured pictures.

There were other visitors to the museum, so presently Sava and my husband and I found ourselves alone in a little room that had been the boudoir of one of the princesses. It was furnished chiefly with an ornate upright piano and a tapestry picture of Verdi wearing white spats, and it looked on the palace gardens, which are now a public park but were nevertheless being used at the moment as a drying-ground for somebody's sheets. I found myself thinking of the thousands of men with fezes and women with veils that I had seen in the streets of Sarajevo, turning away in desolation because the representatives of the New Turkey had looked on them coldly and had told them that the old Turkey, which had been their mother, was dead and buried. I asked Sava, "Is that man not very unhappy now that the old Turkey has gone?" "Yes, indeed," answered Sava, "and that was very noticeable when a party of Turkish journalists visited us recently. This poor

fellow looked forward to their coming with the greatest expectations, for the Moslems here never realise, you know, how completely they have been cut off by the Turks of Turkey. They like to think it is the Yugoslavian Government which prevents them from communicating with their co-religionists. So for days before this poor fellow talked of nothing else, and made endless plans for welcoming them. But when they arrived here they were not at all keen to come and see him out of his turn, and he had already been awaiting them for some hours when they arrived. It was obvious that the sight of them was a shock to him, for our Moslems cannot realise that the Turks of Turkey dress like Christians ; and then when he had made his little speech to them they did not answer at once, but first said, 'We think it a pity you wear a fez. The Ataturk does not wish us to wear fezes and it is him we follow nowadays.' But when they had got over that point he took them to see the collection, and began to show them the plaster cast of the Pasha's head, as something that should make them feel very sorry, because the poor man had been a good servant to the Sultan and to Mohammed, and the Montenegrins cut off his head and brought it here, and took this mask of it so that they might gloat over it. But the Turkish journalists would hear nothing of that ; they said, 'We will rather not think of such things. He was one of our soldiers and his head was cut off. But it was we who brought into Europe the sort of civilisation that cuts off heads, and the Ataturk has taught us not to be proud of it.' The visit here was not a success, and the poor curator thought it was not a successful banquet that we gave that night to the Turkish journalists in the hotel here. For we have a delicious kind of raw ham here in Montenegro and they ate a great deal of it. That the curator could not bear to see. He is a very pious Moslem, and not only does he put down his rug and pray at all the prescribed times, but he observes all prohibitions, so you can imagine what it was for him to see the Turks eating pig, the most unclean of all unclean things according to the Prophet. Nor does he drink wine, and these journalists drank much rakia. But he is a very polite man, he rose and said that he must go home because he was feeling ill ; and they were polite also, for they said that they regretted it and hoped he would soon be better. And, indeed, their hopes were needed, for he looked like a sick man for days."

I pressed my face against the window-pane. In the gardens below a woman knelt beside the sheets and fingered them to see if they were still wet ; she must have put them out at dawn if she expected them to be dry by now. Behind two romping children lagged a sad-faced girl, probably a German or an Italian governess. It would be better to be a drudge or an exile than to suffer what this Turk was suffering : to find suddenly that the beliefs which one had learned from one's parents and at school, and which had been the basis of all one's dealings with one's fellow-men, had been abandoned by everybody except oneself. That must be a beggary as bad as lack of bread, for it would take away one's appetite, since to live out to-morrow would be a puzzle without an answer. I told myself, " This must always happen if a national faith is not valid. Of course the Turkish faith was not valid. Ferocity and voluptuousness, though they travel with superior companions, with courage and beauty, are apparently insufficient. Death must be allowed to carry out the dead, and if a civilisation cannot stand it must fall."

After a moment when I believed I was thinking of nothing, only watching the woman pick up her sheets, the girl call to her pupils and heavily quicken her steps when they paid no heed, my heart turned over. I must, in fact, have been thinking of many things, all of them disagreeable. I said to myself, " My civilisation must not die. It need not die. My national faith is valid, as the Ottoman faith was not. I know that the English are as unhealthy as lepers compared with perfect health. They do not give themselves up to feeling or to work as they should, they lack readiness to sacrifice their individual rights for the sake of the corporate good, they do not bid the right welcome to the other man's soul. But they are on the side of life, they love justice, they hate violence and they respect the truth. It is not always so when they deal with India or Burmah ; but that is not their fault, it is the fault of Empire, which makes a man own things outside his power to control. But among themselves, in dealing with things within their reach, they have learned some part of the Christian lesson that it is our disposition to crucify what is good, and that we must therefore circumvent our barbarity. This measure of wisdom makes it right that my civilisation should not perish."

Sava said to me " Over there is a coach-house which I

would like you to notice. For years it was crammed with trunks containing valuable articles of clothing and jewellery, the personal property of Nicholas and his family, who left them behind in the haste of their flight to Scutari. Poor as our people are, and accustomed to looting as an actual part of military technique, nobody touched these things. They thought it beneath their dignity to take what had belonged to their unworthy king." It was an impressive story, but his tone and his profile evoked the monotonous white colonnade of Montenegrin heroism, its tedious temple of victory. I felt a distaste I had better stop feeling, if I were not to find myself in the same plight as the Turk. If I wanted my civilisation to survive under attack — and I would have learned from this journey that it was going to be attacked, even had I started in ignorance — I had to be willing to fight for it. This necessity did not lessen because fighting meant the sacrifice of most of the subtle variations that it has been the happy business of the intellect to impose on the instinctive life. I had to be willing to fight for it even though my own cause could not fail to be repulsive to me, since the essence of civilisation was disinclination for violence, and when I defended it habit would make me fear that I was betraying it.

"But surely, surely," said Sava, "Constantine must have got here by now." And when we got downstairs there was the automobile with Dragutin at the wheel and Constantine inside, ominously in the same attitude, each with his arms folded and his chin sunk on his chest. "Dear God," said Sava, under his breath, "what has this madman from Belgrade been doing now?" My husband went forward and asked Constantine, "Have you found out what has been happening in Albania?" "No," said Constantine, "I got through to Belgrade and talked to my ministry and they knew nothing." "That conversation has taken a long time," said Sava. Constantine shot off his seat like a jack-in-the-box. "It has not! It did not take twenty minutes; no, it took not fifteen minutes! I wonder at you that you compromise our telephone system before foreigners! But since then I had much to do. Much to do," he repeated with a murderous look at Dragutin's shoulders. "Listen," said Dragutin, "only listen. There is no petrol in Tsetinye. None at all. It is because of the Sokol Congress yesterday. But I have enough petrol to take us up Mount Lovchen, and

down to Kotor and Budva, where I can get as much more as I want. But we must not think of that. Oh, no! Instead we must go to every bug-ridden inn and every hencoop that calls itself a garage, and beg them for whatever horse's water they may have chanced to catch in a petrol-tin, until we have enough to go down to the sea and back. So the morning has gone.' "He does not understand," said Constantine haughtily. "I have much experience of travel, I know all roads in Yugoslavia, and in Switzerland and France. I have driven very much also, and I will always take what petrol is necessary to go and come, because I know."

I knew that as he spoke his own words sounded infinitely foolish to him, and that he had driven about Tsetinye because he wanted to strike out at something, no matter what, and nothing but Dragutin's will presented itself. "But certainly there would have been petrol at Kotor or Budva," said Sava. He also was on edge, and he felt a desire to hurt and insult one of the Serb officials who represented the Yugoslavian authority which had been imposed on Montenegro. "So you say," said Constantine, "but how do you know? I tell you, I have vast experience of travel, and I am not so sure." They repeated slight variations on these remarks several times, and there seemed no reason why the conversation should ever stop, so I said, "And now are we going straight to Mount Lovchen?" This distraction was not so successful as I had hoped. For Sava looked along the road and said in a voice sharp as broken glass with anger, "Look what has happened while you have been running round and round Tsetinye because you think there is no petrol on the Adriatic."

The amphitheatre of rock which encloses the town was now surmounted by a high parapet of fog. "Now," said Sava, very straight-nosed, "they will never see the view from Mount Lovchen, which is the most beautiful in the world, which is something you have not got anything like in Serbia. Now they will never see the tomb of the poet Prince-Bishop Peter. Now they will never see Nyegush, which is the cradle of our royal dynasty." "That may be," said my husband, "but it will not be because we are late in starting, for that mist has been there all morning." Sava looked at him distrustfully; but he was such an intellectual that it was easy to persuade him. "I am sure of it," continued my husband, "for I noticed it when



I was shaving in front of my window at seven." When Dragutin gathered from the others what he was saying he looked at him with no sort of doubt at all. Later he told me it was a pity that my husband was a banker and that I wrote books, for we could have done very well at selling things. "And now," said my husband, "let Dragutin drive wherever the mist is thinnest and we will see what we can."

### *Budva*

We stood on a mountainside in a circular cell which held ourselves, Constantine and Sava, an obelisk, and a curved balustrade. This cell was cut out of a dense fog by some magic and arbitrary force which permitted everything within five feet of the spectator to be clearly seen and nothing whatsoever beyond. The automobile on the road was a shadow hardly to be identified save when Dragutin impatiently tooted on the horn. Some time before, Sava had sadly told us, "I can assure you that the view from this obelisk is usually very fine, very fine indeed," and there had followed between him and Constantine one of those conversations which came so easily to those two, without any visible exit.

"I tell you," said Constantine, "that we should go straight down to the sea. I know very well all that is to do with mist. I lived a very long time in Geneva, and I have often observed the mists that come down the Rhone Valley, and I know that when the mist is so it does not lift. It would be quite useless to take them up to Mount Lovchen. They would see nothing, nothing at all." "But what has Switzerland to do with Montenegro?" asked Sava. "Switzerland is a country far north of this, and in the centre of the Continent. The conditions are not at all the same. It is here as it is in the Abruzzi, which I know very well, and it is perfectly possible that such a mist as this might lift at any moment, and then they would see what is really the finest sight in the whole of Yugoslavia." "But it is no use going up to the mountain, they would see nothing, nothing at all," said Constantine; "this is something I understand, for in Switzerland it is not as you think, the mists which come down the Rhone Valley are like all mists, by them you can exactly judge all mists, and I tell you I have studied them

for years and years." "But they should take every chance of seeing the view from Lovchen for there is nothing more beautiful," said Sava. "I must point out that the conditions here would naturally be more like those in Italy than those in Switzerland, and there such a mist as this would lift." As they spoke Constantine seemed to get shorter and shorter, and Sava taller and taller.

My husband and I moved away, and after a few steps we stood alone in our own cell. "We are perhaps characters in Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers*," he said. "Or we are travelling on the old Underground as it used to be when I was a child," I said, "in which case we will end up by visiting Whiteley's Menagerie." There sounded above us a soft clop-clop of hooves, Dragutin's horn tooted, there was a scurry and an admonishing cry, and there suddenly strode into visibility a peasant and a pack-horse loaded with wood, which were accompanied by a cloud of fragrance. "Look," said my husband, "he is carrying a huge bunch of narcissus!" So we followed him a little way down the road, as far as would make it certain that Sava and Constantine should not hear my bad Serbian, and then greeted him and asked him to sell us some. He answered, "That I will be glad to do, but I cannot give you all, for I must take some home to my little boy." He was a giant with slaughter written on his brows, and it might have been supposed that his child would have played only with hand grenades.

We were standing in great contentment, each with a nose in a handful of cool flowers, when we heard cries of agitation above us. "Holla! holla!" shouted Constantine, and broke off to exclaim, "Ah, but those two will for ever be doing something extra!" We sent out reassuring calls, and went towards them with some reluctance, for as soon as our friends were satisfied of our safety, they continued to compare Switzerland and the Abruzzi. But they stopped when they saw the narcissus. "Where did you get them?" laughed Constantine, anxious to be mystified. "It is not what I supposed about English bankers, that if you let one wander off in a fog on a barren mountainside he would come back with his hands full of flowers." "It is the banker's wife," said Sava. The compliment was not completely filled in, but the handsome intention was obvious. "Fancy talking so much that you didn't smell

that narcissus going by," jeered Dragutin. "I sniffed in all I could, it was as good as incense in church. And now look over your shoulders! Don't start talking again and miss that!"

There had appeared in the mist below us a silver shape, which might have been a scythe held in an invisible hand only a few yards away, or a vast and unnaturally tilted crescent moon. As we stared it grew greater, it could be recognised as the curved surf of a bay. We exclaimed in wonder, for we had all thought that what we saw was hanging high above the horizon. It faded and was lost, but in another place there appeared a medallion of blue sea stamped with a couchant island, which also defined itself and vanished, and elsewhere we saw the proud nose of a terraced cape dropping to the sun's sparkling wake. Then the wall closed and we were in our cell again. "Hey, what's the use of stopping up here?" cried Dragutin. "Jump in! jump in! There's a fine day down there at Budva! Come along now, or we'll have no time for a swim before lunch!" We drove down the road into a theatrical brightness of sunshine. Beside the road was a gendarmerie that the Austrians had not quite finished building in 1914; through its sashless windows glittered the diamond waves. Below us we could see Budva, a walled town on a round peninsula, a little white tortoise against the blue sea. Golden broom made the sunshine more dazzling, streaming its whips from every crevice where the hoe had not harried it out of existence; for now we were back in an area of cultivation such as we had not seen for many days, of fertility such as made even the fields round Podgoritsa seem haggard in their handsomeness. Here were vineyards and olive groves strong as wine and dense as oil in their abundance, here were terraces insolent with their crop of springing wheat. Dalmatia is not in fact very rich land, even here in the South; but we were looking at it with eyes conditioned by Macedonia and Montenegro, which found a certain grossness in the spectacle of fields completely covered with earth, and that probably to a depth of several inches. The sea also astonished us by its tokens of freedom and wealth. Far out a steamer was less visible than the straight line of its smoke, nearer a yacht lounged like a lazy albatross beside the glassy image of the island, some smaller boats took white sails out on the further crinkled waters. There were many people who did not have to keep their noses to the grindstone lest

they should starve, who could travel for pleasure, there were some who could afford to buy expensive objects, costing more than many meals, and to have many of their kind to wait on them and render all sorts of services that are not strictly necessary, to build them boats, to row them about. In Serbia and Macedonia we had forgotten that there were such.

The Turks ruined the Balkans, with a ruin so great that it has not yet been repaired and may prove irreparable. Budva is one of the smaller Dalmatian towns, for it lay too far south and was too much exposed to naval attack to be valuable to Venice ; yet we felt it very rich, curiously unassailed, very stable. There was a market, held where there have been markets, archaeologists believe, ever since this was a Greek colony. Under the lovely landward walls of the city, which are flecked with magenta wallflowers, two lines of tables are set in the shade of tall twisted plane trees, and peasants sit before them on low stone benches, in the black costumes of the country. Among these people I walked in rapture. They were poor and their wares would have been considered pitiful in any Western market ; but they were not stringy with real physiological lack, none sat with only a little heap of beans before him.

The sight of such plenty, purely relative though it was, exhilarated us all. We hurried under the Lion of St. Mark that held its open book over the city gateway, and took too few moments to admire the neat Chinese-box perfection of the town, which offered in a few yards a ninth-century church, shaped grimly by that fierce early piety, a garden wall hung with a fleece of red roses, stone steps sweeping from the shadow of a great plane tree up to the sunlit heights of a Venetian fortress. For we all dispersed to buy objects we hardly needed, for sheer joy in what seemed to us almost unrestricted merchandise. When we met again outside the shops my husband said, " Look, my dear, I have bought you a silver buckle of Albanian workmanship," and I said, " Look, I have bought us all bathing dresses," and Constantine said, " Look, I have bought these two Turkish daggers for my little sons, and the man has said he will make them blunt for me while we have lunch," and Dragutin said, " Look, I have bought a pair of silk stockings for my wife." And Sava came towards us, through the city gate, saying, " At the hotel over there I have ordered red mullet and palatschinken for lunch, and we will have it on the terrace

among the roses, but you must hurry, you must hurry ! You will not have time to bathe and have lunch and catch your boat at Kotor if you do not hurry ! ” Yet we felt as if the world were bare and empty.

Over the mountains in Macedonia there had been nothing : nothing visible. But there had been the vast invisible treasure left by Byzantium, which had been put out to usury during the captivity of the Slavs, which is now great enough to finance explorations of the spirit not to be considered in poorer countries. It was as if we had lost a large sum of capital, as if we must look forward to a future full of mean economies.

As we walked to the bathing-beach we paused from time to time to look back at the exquisite profile of Budva, the island lying complacent in the bay beyond, the fastness of Montenegro, which ran up half the sky behind them. On the beach about thirty people, grown-ups and children, were being gently happy, without much noise, splashing in the water or lying on the sand, showing a nakedness not beautiful but clean and sturdy. A girl gave us towels and tickets for bathing-boxes, and said wickedly, “ So many men and only one woman. I would like to know how that gets itself done,” and all my companions laughed gallantly, as if they were indeed with me for some romantic reason. As we came out of the boxes the hot sand burned our feet, and the people lying on their spread towels smiled at us lazily and not unkindly as we hopped down to the sea. There came no shock as we went in, for the water was hardly water, being fused with sunshine. It worked its progressive magic on us, delighting the skin, then the blood, then the muscles. We took it according to our natures : Sava and my husband struck out to sea with the deliberate stateliness of trained athletes, while Constantine pulled himself through the water like a strong dog, and Dragutin, revelling in the buoyancy of the sea compared to the rivers where he usually bathed, was rolling over and over on the surface.

“ Just to be alive is good,” I said to my husband, as we stood outside the box squeezing the water out of our bathing-dresses. “ Just to be alive,” he said. Constantine came out of his box, pulling down his tie like a dandy, and said, “ Now do I feel an upright man. I know I am only a clean man, but I feel I am also upright.” A passing child tripped over his foot, and he steadied it by putting his hand behind its neck. It thanked him

in a strange sing-song. "The little one is a Czech," said Constantine, his eyes following it benignly. "Most of the visitors here are Czechs," said Sava, "and we find them very quiet, honest people. It is only the poorer kind that come here, tradesmen and clerks, for there is no big modern hotel, but they could not be better behaved." "Yes, the Czechs are good," said Constantine, "we Yugoslavs laugh at them, but they are very good, and they are our brothers." The two men, nodding in agreement, looked round at the brown and wholesome people, who had by now all come out of the water and were lying still and relaxed under the thumb of the noon. Dragutin burst out of his box, slapping himself on the chest. "Now I feel like a hero!" he said. "Show me a Turk, show me a Croat, show me a Schwab!"

As we made our way back to the town Sava said, "Now you have seen what the Adriatic is like in summer, I hope you will come back another year and will enjoy yourselves as much as your King Edward (for I do not know how you stand in this matter and whether you prefer to call him that or the Duke of Windsor) did when he came here on his yacht. It was to me that it fell to make the arrangements for his stay here, since my district extends to Dubrovnik, and I must tell you that I could not have had a pleasanter duty. I found him most sympathetic. I have never had to look after any ruler, or indeed any public character, who was so anxious to be considerate." He told us how the Duke had taken pains to find out whether his presence at a garden-restaurant meant that the police forbade people to dance, and how he had moved his yacht from an anchorage because the occupants of a villa near the landing-stage were inconvenienced by the crowds that waited for him. This was Sava's form of homage to the day, to the bath. He said nothing about his bodily sensations, for that was contrary to the reticence which is part of the heroic Montenegrin role; but to show that he was finding life agreeable he was relating agreeable anecdotes, and he thought an anecdote would be specially agreeable to us if it concerned our royal family.

We sat down at our table on the balcony. Roses grew about the wooden pillars, among the napkins were scattered pink geraniums, smelling of earth. For apéritif we drank a wine of the country like a light port, but running thinner over the tongue. Sava's reminiscences took a melancholy turn which

were entirely sincere, yet at the same time artistic, a phrase in a minor key that gave an appropriate end to the melody. "But he could not be king," he said firmly; "he was a most admirable prince, but it was not right he should be king. That we all realised one night at Dubrovnik. When he was at table it happened that a telegram was delivered to him which was not for him but for his secretary. It was hard for us to believe our eyes when we saw him look at the telegram and toss it down the table to the secretary. Do you understand? He did not give it to the waiter, he tossed it to his secretary—so." At the end of the gesture he shook his head sadly and finished his glass. "No, he could not have been king."

Under my clothes my skin still kept the joy given by the salt water, the freshness had not left my blood. They brought a great platter of picturesque fish and another kind of wine. A wind blew fragrance from the roses, and brought six white sails scudding towards the town from the open sea. Constantine, who was sitting next me, stood up. "But what is this?" he cried. "Look at those automobiles!" Not far from the city gate is an open space shaded with palm trees, where automobiles can be parked, and when we had left our own there it had been alone. Now there were six or seven with it, all of makes more costly than one would have expected to see at Budva. "Look, every one of them has its little flag! They are all diplomatic automobiles. Certainly they cannot have come from the Legations at Belgrade. There is only one place they can have come from, and that is Tirana, that is Albania. I wish very much that we knew what it is with Albania." We stopped eating and sat with our eyes fixed on the enamelwork and chromium that gleamed darkly in the shadow of the palms, the little twitching flags. "Must it be something important?" I asked reluctantly. "Certainly, it must be something very important!" exclaimed Constantine. "The diplomats have not all come out of Albania merely to swim on the plage at Budva! They came into Yugoslavia so that they can telephone and telegraph to their Governments without the Albanians knowing what they say. I am afraid it is bad, very bad, with Albania, for it cannot be good, since Italy has her foot in there."

Sava said, "It is again as it was in the time of the Turks." "How can we find out what it is?" mourned Constantine, and added bitterly, "If I were an official here I would have known

long ago, I would have known as soon as it happened." Sava marmoreally gave answer, "But I am not in the police," and there might have been an acrimonious exchange had not Constantine cried, "Ah, now I can find out! You see that young man over there, on the other side of the road? I know him well. I tell you I have many friends and they are everywhere, and he is from Albania, this little one. Stephanopoli! Holla, Stephanopoli! He is a Greek, and it was in Athens that I have been with him, and he knows all languages, so he works in one of the Legations at Tirana. Holla, Stephanopoli! Ah, he heard me!" "The whole of Dalmatia must have done that," said Sava.

Monsieur Stephanopoli, waving to show that he was pleased to see Constantine, but not smiling, came towards us and halted under the balcony, bowing formally. No, he could not lunch with us. Since he found himself at Budva he must pay a call on a cousin of his who was married to the Mayor. He was a spruce young man, with a felt hat perched at a proper angle on his crenellated hair and a well-cut lounge suit, and it seemed strange that he should show the face that, as the picture papers and news reels have taught us, the inhabitants of regions long vexed by ungenial history wear in times of crisis. It is above all weary; such a look might come to an often beaten drunkard's wife when she hears staggering footsteps coming to her door. Constantine stopped speaking French and barked out enquiries in that angular tongue, modern Greek. The young man answered in short grumbling sentences, growing sullen-eyed and pinched about the nostrils. His lower lip protruding, he took out a pocket-comb and passed it through his crenellated hair while Constantine cried, "I told you it was bad with Albania. It is very bad. It is a massacre. The officials all are bought by Italian money, and they have taken the four hundred young men who were most likely to give Italy trouble when she takes the country, and they have pretended it is a Communist rising, and they have killed them all. It is all nasty, so nasty, and it will not stop till the end."





## EPILOGUE

**T**HAT was the end of our Easter journey. We said good-bye to Constantine at Kotor and caught our great white shining boat, and before we slept laid eyes again on Dubrovnik, which was complete beyond the habit of real cities against the whitish darkness of the starry June night, complete as a city on a coin. In the morning the Dalmatian coast slid by us, naked as a quarry, until at dusk we came to Sushak, the port where we had started. The next day we travelled back towards Zagreb through mountains which had seemed, when we saw them last, to be incapable of knowing anything but winter, to be committed to snow, but were now lion-coloured and so parched that it seemed inconceivable they should know any hour but noon, any season but summer. Now, as then, nothing human dared to be abroad. In valleys so archetypal of desolation that the memory stirred with forgotten Biblical names, and muttered of Horeb and Baca, scarlet flowers and colourless boulders wavered in the glassy, heat-demented air, and there was no more actual movement anywhere. The high pastures and the pine-forests of the Croatian uplands, where girls with coloured head kerchiefs kept their cows, and woodcutters in round caps swung their axes were a relief not only to the eyes but to the lungs and the muscles.

Three or four hours short of Zagreb, we left the train and spent a day at the Plitvitse Lakes, the most laughing and light-minded of natural prodigies. Here the creative spirit is as far from the normal as at Niagara or the Grand Canyon or the Matterhorn; but it is untouched by the tragic or by terror, it is solely dedicated to gaiety and loveliness. Sixteen lakes, some large, some small, lie among lawns and wooded hills, joined by glittering and musical waterfalls that are sometimes

spiral staircases and sometimes amphitheatres and sometimes chutes, but are always ingeniously pretty, without a trace of the majestic. It is rare to find great beauty on this plane ; Mozart put the finest metal of his genius into Susanna, who is nevertheless a soubrette, but there are few analogies in any art. Here, for a morning and an afternoon, we walked between the green shades of the woodlands, where light was ambient, and the light of the waters which rose clear through the green shadows, and we talked of Constantine. This place was in a sense his discovery. He had gone to it as a boy, when it was still in Austria and unvisited because it lay in the territory of the barbarous Slavs, and he had often celebrated it in his work. Some of his phrases came back to our memories and made us miserable by their aptness, for we both loved him, and now he was utterly lost to us.

There was embarrassment and uneasiness in our grief. For we could not have been more finally divided if there had been between us a bitter personal dispute in which all three had behaved as badly as possible. Yet there was nothing of the sort, merely impersonal differences. We were English, Constantine was a Slav Jew with a German wife. But we had grown up in a world which told us that to transcend such differences and to insist that intercourse should depend on the recognition of individuality was the mark of a civilised person, so we felt that we had been childish and ill-bred in permitting the estrangement to declare itself. This, however, we knew to be nonsense. The truth was worse than this. The past had bade us overlook racial and national differences because they had then no significance to compare with that which must follow from the clash between one man's good faith and another's roguery ; for all Europeans were agreed in their ideal of a moral society. Since then the world had altered. Now different races and nationalities cherish different ideals of society that stink in each other's nostrils with an offensiveness beyond the power of any but the most monstrous private deed. My husband and I thought Gerda's black was white, she thought our white was black : Constantine's eyes were as ours, but his heart was with Gerda, and he could not compel her as the clever should compel the stupid, for he felt himself weak, being of a stateless and persecuted people. That the subject of our difference was political and not sexual or financial made it less and not more reparable.

Late in the afternoon, as we drank coffee and ate bread and cherry jam on our balcony, the light grew steely, the great lake below us blackened, a searching cyclonic wind tossed every single tree-top in the forests to a green twisting peak. The scene was suddenly hidden by curtains of shrieking rain. "Our thunderstorms are very fine," said the waiter in dreamy pride, "and they usually last for three days." He was surprised that we ordered an automobile to take us to the station. In the remoter parts of Europe one is always coming on vestiges of antique literary movements, and this waiter belonged to the romantic epoch, though he was actually quite a young man. It seemed to him proper, since we were persons of some means and education, that we should follow the style of the lovers in *The Sorrows of Werther*, who at the sound of thunder fell into each other's arms, trembling with sensibility and murmuring the name of the German poet who had written an ode to a storm: Klopstock, it unfortunately was. Three days of thunderstorm, to people with luggage like ours, should have been like a Bayreuth Festival.

A quick train took us to Zagreb by nightfall. In the restaurant of the large modern hotel near the station we felt again, though more intensely, that resentment at being glutted with material goods and at the same time deprived of certain more important essentials which had come on us before the comparative abundance of the Budva shops. There were countless dishes on the menu, but the people around us were colourless and inexpressive. Their clothes did not tell us where they came from or what they were, and their vivacity fell short of explaining its causes to the onlooker. Here, we thought as we lay ungratefully in our comfortable beds, the life of the soul would not, as in the other Slav lands, take forms visible to the corporeal eye. In this the morning proved us wrong. It was to be written before us, in letters as large as Zagreb, that here also, as at the Plitvitse Lakes, romanticism still lingered, but took a less innocent form than a swoon beneath a thunderstorm.

The town we at first imagined to be simply on holiday, as Roman Catholic towns so often are, for most of the shops were shut and many people were sitting on the benches in the public gardens. But soon we were perplexed by an incongruity. It was apparent that this was no festival but a day of mourning, for there hung from many windows the long narrow black flags

which all over the Balkans mark a bereaved household. Yet it was pleasure that the people seemed to be expecting. They were looking sly as if they knew someone meant to take it from them, but they were certain of enjoying it in the end. We forgot all this when we came to the market-place, for whatever was afoot in the town the peasant from the country cared more about selling his goods, and the stalls were out and the umbrellas up round the statue of Yellatchitch. Again it was startling to see peasants with such large stores in their possession: though when we had bought a sackful of lustrous and luscious black cherries for a penny or two and an elaborately embroidered table-cloth for a few shillings and remembered that these people had to buy a certain amount of manufactured goods, such as boots, farm tools and kitchen-ware, it was apparent that to them this plenty must be a mockery of itself. Without anything like Italian or German importunity, but with a sober thoroughness, the people were showing us what they had to sell, when a babble sounded and they looked over their shoulders. A crowd was pouring down the steps that fall from the Cathedral square to the corner of the market-place. The woman who had spread out some tray-cloths in front of us compressed her lips and folded up her goods, then turned about and began to take down the umbrella that sheltered her stall. The spring was stiff and her fingers crooked on it as she said wearily, "It is the funeral of the three Croats who were killed by the Serbs at the Song Festival at Senj. There will be a riot, you had better go."

Six months later, in London, I learned what had really happened at Senj, from an English girl who had actually seen the shooting. She had been motoring from Zagreb to Dubrovnik, and a collision with a cart had meant she had to stay at Senj for forty-eight hours while the local garage carried out repairs. On the second day of her sojourn the town was given over to a Congress of Croatian and Dalmatian Choral Societies. Often, on the Continent, clubs that are ostensibly dedicated to simple and straightforward pastimes have a covert political purpose. In Poland, for example, table-tennis associations were often foci of Jewish Liberalism; and in Croatia and Dalmatia people apparently only sing part-songs if they are convinced Separatists and followers of the dead Raditch and the living Matchek. There were a great many of these part-singers there. They flocked in from earliest dawn in such

numbers that the peace of the town was shattered, though some extra gendarmes had been imported during the previous night. Throughout the day, which was very hot, there was much singing, and towards evening there was much drinking, liberating the political sentiments as well as the voices of the choristers. By dusk the gendarmes, who had been jeered at and baited since morning, were trying to impose order on narrow streets packed with crowds roaring seditious songs, through which horse-carts and automobiles which were taking home members of the remoter societies could hardly force a way. At one cross-roads a gendarme was running up and down among the pedestrians in a vain attempt to clear a way for a charabanc full of choristers; both the people in the street and in the charabanc were shouting taunts and insults at him. Suddenly there was the sound of an explosion. The gendarme believed that he had been fired at by the people in the charabanc, and that was the first impression of the English girl, who was standing a few yards away from him. Actually a small automobile, hidden from them by the charabanc, had suffered a tyre-burst. But the gendarme, hot, tired, exasperated and frightened, spent no time in investigation. He shot back at the charabanc and killed five young men.

The Croat leaders, who are not naïve, cannot have believed that the Yugoslav Government wanted a gendarme to pick off five Croats of no particular importance in circumstances which admitted of no concealment and were bound to provoke far-reaching resentment. But they were not moved by this consideration to allay the passions of their followers. These now poured down the steps and spread all over the market-place, entirely surrounding the peasants who, with increasing gloom and haste, were dismantling their stalls and gathering their wares into heaps. "You should have gone," said the woman who had been selling us linen, "the gendarmes are here, and there may be shooting." From the side of the market-place opposite the steps there were advancing some twenty gendarmes, holding their rifles ready for use. At the sight of them the crowd, which numbered at least a thousand, stopped singing. Then, in one corner, several young men in succession shouted anti-Serb, pro-Croat slogans, and the people round them raised fierce cheers. At that the gendarmes began to charge them not savagely, but as if to get the demonstrators

moving, and immediately the crowd in front of them fell silent, while those behind them broke into louder slogans, fiercer cheers. The gendarmes stopped, wavered, spun about and charged the new storm-centre. As soon as they were under way the second group of patriots became quiet and submissive, drawing back timidly, while the first group raised shouts and cheers that were war-cries, that incited to bloodshed, and made a threatening rush at the gendarmes' back. The wretched creatures wheeled round again, and the whole market-place burst into hoots and whistles.

This demonstration must have been rehearsed as carefully as an American football game; and indeed, in spite of its mournful cause, it was a game to those who took part in it. The glee that the city had been promising itself since morning shone undisguised from their faces, and if there had been any in the Cathedral who had remembered to grieve for the dead youths, there were none here. All were lost in the intoxication of their sport, in defiance of the claims of pity and not less of self-preservation, for it was as dangerous as any on earth. They were wrestling with their natural friends, their fellow-Slavs, while their natural foes, the Germans and Austrians, the Italians and the Hungarians, stood round them in a circle, waiting for the first sign of collapse that would make it safe to fall on them and strip them and slay them.

Adequate reinforcements arrived for the gendarmes, the crowd melted, the peasants sighed and set about putting up their stalls again and displaying their wares. We finished our transaction with the linen-seller, but she would not discuss what had been happening round us. "It's politics, all politics," she said, "no sensible person talks about politics." But the man at the next stall we stopped by, who sold leather-work, was eager to tell us that two "of us Croats" had been murdered by Serb gendarmes in cold blood. He spoke with a peculiar whining drawl, complaining and yet exultant, but his eyes remained cheerful, and he must have taken little interest in the affair not to have discovered that more than two were being buried. "Let us go to the University," I said, "there we will find Valetta, and he will tell us what all this is about." We went through narrow streets where some shopkeepers were putting up their shutters and others were taking them down, all with a look of furtive glee, and the long black flags were

flapping from every second house, and we found the open space round the University given up to a static kind of riot. Gendarmes were standing on the steps in front of locked doors, while a number of young men walked up and down before the building, sometimes breaking into mocking cheers and shouting slogans.

"Will you be good enough to explain to us what all this is about?" asked my husband, addressing a little man in a mustard-coloured suit who was standing at a street corner. He was one of those individuals to be seen in the larger towns of the Balkans, or in Scandinavia, or in any country with a predominantly peasant population, who, though poor almost to the point of beggary, and driven to the most menial occupations, are sustained in happy gentility by their possession of Western clothes and urban status. "I am delighted to be of service to strangers of quality," he answered, in old-fashioned and flowery German. "What has happened here is that the students were anxious to make a demonstration about the massacre of Senj, and the authorities will not have it, so they have closed the University." "And what was the massacre of Senj?" asked my husband. "Why," said the little man, falling into the same complaining and exultant whine, "Serb gendarmes down there at a Song Festival, killed some of us Croats for no reason, with dum-dum bullets." Without strength or skill or land, he would not have lasted out a single winter under a Nazi régime. He could only hope to survive in just such a loose and unspecialised economy as this Yugoslavian state, against which, in obedience to a political habit as mechanical and irrationalised as a facial twitch, he was complacently rebelling. Just then my eye was caught by two large, loosely formed spheres in neutral colours, one blackish grey, the other brownish black. These were the behinds of two peasant women who were employed by the municipalities to weed the flower-beds at the corners of the square. They were being idiots, private persons in the same sense as the nurse in my London nursing-home, who was unable to imagine why the assassination of King Alexander should perturb anybody but his personal friends. They were paid to pull up weeds, and they wanted the money, so they continued to pull them up, even when the students raised a shout and brought some gendarmes down on them not fifteen yards away. As I looked at those devoted

behinds, bobbing up and down over their exemplary task, and the smug face of the automatic rebel, I thanked God for the idiocy of women, which must in many parts of the world have been the sole defender of life against the lunacy of men.

On our way back to the hotel we saw a dozen gendarmes slinking back into a police station, turning their faces away from a booing crowd. They looked very frightened men, and that is not to say that they were cowards. They were well aware that a Croat need pay no higher price than three years' imprisonment for killing a Serb gendarme and had been known to get off with eighteen months. And they must have been well aware also that there was hardly a soul in the city, save the Serb population, who here are wholly disregarded, to feel one movement of good-will or pity for them. Before we left Zagreb we spoke of the demonstrations to several people, in the shops, at our hotel, and at the railway station, and all save one, who was not a Croat but a Slovene, expressed a loathing for Yugoslavia, and for all the instruments of its being. In every case the reason for that loathing was candidly exposed as dislike for the inferior Oriental civilisation of the Serb, the South Slav. The Croats' place, it was felt, was with the West: which implied, with what remained of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. We were to find out just how reciprocal that feeling was on the next stage of our journey.

After midday we took the train to Budapest, and all the hot afternoon we travelled through fields that were purple and white and rose with flowers, or smouldered brass-coloured with ripening grain. In winter the mud of the Central European plains makes them seem, to the urban visitor, the very essence of the negative; in summer their fertility, which has nothing of vegetable innocence about it, which is charged with a sense of abandonment and gratification, make them as positive as any mountain range. Then the darkness came, and with it the lights of Budapest. They dazzled us. In no Balkan towns are there such lights, nor is there any such hotel as the Dunapalota, with its polished floors of costly woods, its thick carpets and its tapestries, its lavishness of finely woven and extravagantly washed linen on the tables, on the waiters' bosoms, in the bathrooms and on the beds. Nor in any Balkan town are there shops such as lined the streets we walked in the next morning, shops stuffed with goods, all new and fresh, none mildewed or



faded, of many different patterns, far beyond the requirements of strict necessity. "Are there so many kinds of shoes?" I marvelled, before a window that was itself a marvel, with its width of plate-glass. "And why did you break your journey at Zagreb?" asked our friends in Budapest. "There is nothing there."

In a sense it was true. The lights of Zagreb are hardly lights, compared with the staring brilliance of Budapest. And we could not explain the sense in which it was not true, for here there was no such pursuit of ideas through the vaults and corridors of the mind as was the custom at Zagreb. In no café in Budapest were we invited to discuss the greatness of Vaughan the Silurist, or the nature of the spirit. The conversation here was preoccupied exactly to the degree and to the intensity which it had been when I had last visited it in 1924, with the need for the territory lost to Hungary by the Treaty of Trianon. There had been sold everywhere in those days a map, inscribed with the words "Nem, nem soha", which is Magyar for "No, no, never", and showing the country in a black ring of the lands that were formerly hers and were now joined to Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Yugoslavia and Austria. It was still being sold, and it appeared to be a complete map of the Hungarian mind. The hairdresser at the Dunapalota talked irredentist propaganda to me from the first moment that my head came out of the suds till the last moment before it went under the dryer, not as if he were a fanatic, for he seemed of comfortable temperament, but as if he knew nothing else to talk about. The only new element that had succeeded in surviving alongside this preoccupation was pride in the growing intimacy with Italy. Our friends boasted of the splendid reception that Budapest had given to King Victor Emmanuel a week or two before, and even offered to take us to see news films of the processions.

This was as near national imbecility as may be; it exceeded the folly of the Croats. These people were attending to none of their internal problems, though they had an unreformed land system which prevented the peasant from feeling full loyalty to the State, and their financial policy had committed them to a degree of industrialisation incompatible with their limited markets. The areas they desired to reclaim were by a substantial majority not Hungarian by blood, and had always

loathed them and their rule ; so the reclamation would confront them with grave administrative difficulties. And the sole hope of maintaining Hungarian independence lay in continuance of the dispensation set up by the Peace Treaties. If the state of Europe were such that Czecho-Slovakia, Roumania and Yugoslavia could be dismembered, then Hungary could be annihilated. She has no military or strategic or political advantage that she could use as a bargaining point ; she would be ground to powder between the upper and the nether mill-stones of Germany and Italy. Though she would probably be given her lost territories as a bribe to expedite her submission, they would be of no use to her. They served her interests formerly only because Austria was anxious to build up a solid Dual Monarchy to counterbalance the Hohenzollern Germany on the one hand and Russia on the other, and irrigated Hungary with an artificial prosperity. Germany and Italy would have no such reason for pampering her ; they would steal her grain and cattle, partition her, flood her with traders and colonists, attack her language, attempt to destroy her identity.

" We cannot think," said our friends to us, as we sat drinking apricot brandy in rooms glorious with Gobelin tapestries and Aubusson carpets, " why you English do not support our revisionist programme more strongly. After all, we Hungarians are so like the English, our lives are governed by the same conception of ' the gentleman.' " Had they not better, we suggested, get on good terms with their Balkan neighbours and join them in preparation against the evil day ? They thought not. How could they ever be on good terms with those neighbours, they demanded, isolated in their obsession as gold-fish in a bowl, until the stolen lands had been restored ? And of the evil day they would not think. A young man paused in playing the piano to say languidly, " If it should come to a war against Nazismus it will be very unpleasant, for one will not know on which side one should fight." Astonished, we asked him what he meant. " Well," he explained airily, as if he spoke of something that was going to happen only in a play or a novel, " it will be a war between Nazismus and Communismus, and the one is as bad as the other." That there were other ideas which humanity might consider it worth while to defend could quite easily be forgotten in this country, on whose heart was written the not subtle, not complicated text, " Nem, nem

soha ". But the cause of our astonishment was not that forgetfulness. This young man was a Jew, and we would have supposed that he would lie in no doubt as to whether he would fight for or against the Nazis, if only because the Nazis themselves would have felt no doubts on the subject. " Yes," said an Englishman who had long lived in Budapest, " the Jews here are all like that. The tide of anti-Semitism is rising around them. Not a single Jew was asked to any of the parties given for the King of Italy. Yet they seem quite unresentful against the Germans, who called that tune, or the Italians, who are keeping it up."

But they were not unresentful against the Slavs. Jews and Gentiles alike were puzzled and irritated because we had spent so long in Yugoslavia. " But what do you find to do there ? " they asked. " You found it beautiful ? Yes, I suppose it is, but then the people are such barbarians, the life is so savage, it is like going among animals." People who, I must own, seemed not greatly superior to me in refinement, described how they had been unable to enjoy the scenery and architecture of Dalmatia because of the revolting manners of the inhabitants. Remembering the Professor at Split, the man with the portwine stain at Hvar, the Cardinal and his family at Korchula, I thought they had been singularly unfortunate or were insanely delicate. I heard again the legend that the whole of Trogir, not only a small stone relief of a lion, had been destroyed by Yugoslav vandals. I heard many anecdotes : one related to an expedition of steamer tourists from Kotor up to Tsetinye which was marred because a doctor, accustomed, it was said by way of explanation, to live in Africa, had struck, though only lightly, a Montenegrin chauffeur. On hearing of this event, I closed my eyes as if some heavy explosion were about to take place in the room. But turning the subject to Croatia had not at all the effect that would have been hoped for in Zagreb. " But the Croats are so stupid ! " said our Budapest friends, their voices rising in the squeak of laughter that comes with memory of a joke learned from Nanny in the nursery. It appeared that in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire the Croats were as the Wise Men of Gotham, as the natives of silly Suffolk, as the men of Pudsey seem to the men of Leeds. I think that is the only part they have ever played in the Hapsburg cosmos.

The Croats looked to the German-speaking world and had

received nothing but a sense that sweet and decorous it is to hate all their brother Slavs. The Hungarians looked to the German-speaking world and had received nothing but a sense that sweet and decorous it is to despise all others than oneself, and to seize whatever these despised others might think to be their own. This destructive education had imposed itself even on the Jews, who once were a great creative people, who are now the greatest interpreters of modern European creativeness. What was in them had been emptied out and spilt on the earth. There was not even left to them the necessary fear that should leap up in a man's breast to defend it from his enemy's sword. And it was not any post-war exhaustion, nor any perplexity caused by the world slump, that had depleted them. Long before the war, the Jewish "revolver journalists" were notorious. They sat at Zemun, on the Hungarian-Serbian frontier, and sent back to Budapest and Vienna wholly unreliable and desperately venomous dispatches representing Belgrade as a nest of anti-Hapsburg conspiracies. It is often alleged in defence of these international saboteurs that they were moved by respectable racial motives: the anti-Semitic policy of Russia had inspired them with a desire to take vengeance on all Slavs. Unfortunately for this apology they had fulfilled their mischievous function with equal ardour during the years when Serbia and Russia were enemies. They were acting not as Jews, but as Germanised Jews.

It is as if a fountain of negativism plays in the centre of Europe, killing all living things within the reach of its spray. This lethal action is not to be conceived as a Teuton reaction to the Slav. It knows no such racial limitation. Life, under any label, is the enemy. That was to be demonstrated to me in Vienna by a golden-haired girl who presented herself one evening at my hotel on what I found an embarrassing errand. I found her in our sitting-room after an unpleasant incident. We had lunched with a friend out at his house beyond Baden-bei-Wien, and we had been driven there by the chauffeur who always served us during our visits, a thick-set man in his early thirties, with yellow hair and blue eyes that looked blind, like Gerda's. On our journey home there had been a sudden thunderstorm, and to avoid the height of its violence we drew up at a wayside inn. The three of us sat and drank beer in the well-scrubbed little saloon, and presently there came up, as

could have been foretold, the subject of Vienna's economic distress and political unrest. The chauffeur, his voice falling into the whine that can be heard in Austria whenever it has to be recognised that loaves do not grow on trees, said "It is terrible for us Viennese, terrible. And we are all so disappointed, for we had hoped that things would be better. Did I not drive for Major Fey in the February Revolution, because I thought that it was going to put an end to talk, and that Major Fey and his party were really going to do something, but here we are, it is just the same as ever." I groaned aloud.

That February Revolution of 1934 lives in popular memory by its malevolent destruction of the Karl Marx Hof and other blocks of flats; but worse than that was its nihilism. A group of people with no economic or political ideas had believed that they could magically induce prosperity simply by destroying another group of people whom they believed, not wholly with foundation, to have such ideas. They had no other programme. Schuschnigg, who was their nominee, stood for absolutely nothing, for no principle, for no theory, even for no opinion, except the rejection of everyone else's opinions. I had been for the last few weeks with people so poor that the chauffeur's food and clothes would have represented an extreme of luxury that they could never hope to enjoy if they worked for fifty years. They could outbid him on his own excuse, and their history showed when it had brought them a ruler of spurious royalty, that the springs of ferocity were high in them. But they would not have gone out and destroyed a number of their brothers in the cause of pure nothingness. "To put an end to talk . . . really going to do something . . ." The peasants on the Black Mountains of Skopje, the Bulgarian pastrycooks at Ochrid, the innkeeper's son at Petch, the old woman walking on the road over the Montenegrin mountains, none of them were involved in arguments so void of content that such phrases would have come to them. As the chauffeur looked at us, wondering at our sudden silence, his gaze was astonishing in its blindish quality. It was as if there were a stupidity behind the retina which admitted only light, which excluded all else that man usually learns by seeing.

In my sitting-room I found the golden-haired girl, with a letter from a Viennese friend of mine who coaches university students in English, saying that this was one of his favourite

pupils and that she had chosen my works as the subject of her thesis. I was naturally appalled. I explained that I was a writer wholly unsuitable for her purpose : that the bulk of my writing was scattered through American and English periodicals ; that I had never used my writing to make a continuous disclosure of my own personality to others, but to discover for my own edification what I knew about various subjects which I found to be important to me ; and that in consequence I had written a novel about London to find out why I loved it, a *Life of St. Augustine* to find out why every phrase I read of his sounded in my ears like the sentence of my doom and the doom of my age, and a novel about rich people to find out why they seemed to me as dangerous as wild boars and pythons, and that consideration of these might severally play a part in theses on London or St. Augustine or the rich, but could not fuse to make a picture of a writer, since the interstices were too wide.

To my annoyance the golden-haired girl treated this explanation as a proof of modesty, which it was not, and I saw something inexorable in her intensity, which I could not regard as proof of my importance, in view of the determination of every German university student to find a subject for his thesis which nobody has treated before. I remembered how one such student had gained his doctorate by a thesis on *Mealy Potatoes, a Drury Lane dancer, mentioned on one single occasion by Dickens*, whose identity he had tracked through London parish registers, and how he had been surpassed by a successor whose effort was entitled, "*Die Schwester von Mealy Potatoes*". The golden-haired girl belonged to this inexorable tradition, and my uneasiness did not prevent her from putting to me a long list of questions. But my answers soon made her even more uneasy than I was. She wanted to pigeon-hole me into a recognised school, and demanded to know what writers had influenced me. It disconcerted her when I reported that as a young person I had tried to write like Mark Twain, that he still seemed to me more fortunate than the princes of the earth in his invariably happy relations with his medium. "But is not Mark Twain an American?" she asked doubtfully. "And a humorous writer?" It was instantly clear to me, as it would have been to any writer, that literature was a closed territory to her and that she would never be able to read a single book. In spite of my glowering she continued, but we found no common ground

in the discussion of any of my preferences, even when she accepted them as legitimate.

Presently she said, "I have enough about English writers now," looking at her notes with some sullenness, as if she foresaw trouble before her in pushing my mind, which appeared to have lost its label, into the proper pigeon-hole. "Tell me," she asked, "about the European writers that have influenced you." "There was Dumas first of all," I said, "whose *Three Musketeers*, whose *Count of Monte Cristo*, taught one in the nursery what romance was, how adventure could prove that what looks to be the close-knit fabric of life is in fact elastic. Then in one's early teens there was Ibsen, who corrected the chief flaw in English literature, which is a failure to recognise the dynamism of ideas. The intellectual world is largely of English creation, yet our authors write of ideas as if they were things to pick and choose, even though the choice might be pushed to the extremity of martyrdom, as if they could be left alone, as if they came into play only as they were picked and chosen. But that ideas are the symbols of relationships among real forces that make people late for breakfast, that take away their breakfast, that make them beat each other across the breakfast-table, is something which the English do not like to realise. Lazy, bone-lazy, they wish to believe that life is lived simply by living.

"Yes," I continued, glowing with interest in my theme, though my listener was not, "Ibsen converted me to the belief that it is ideas which make the world go round. But as I grew older I began to realise that Ibsen cried out for ideas for the same reason that men call out for water, because he had not got any. He was a moralist of an extremely simple sort, who had heard, but only as a child might hear the murmur of a shell, the voice of the philosophical ocean. *Brand* is not a play about religion, it is a crude presentation of the ascetic impulse. *A Doll's House* is not a play about the emancipation of women — indeed none of the fundamental issues of that movement are touched — but a naïve and sturdy suggestion that in the scales of justice perhaps mean integrity may weigh less than loving fraud. But with my appetite for ideas whetted by Ibsen I turned back to the literature of my own country, which was then claiming to satisfy it. For this was the time of Galsworthy, Wells, Shaw——"

"Ah, Show, Show," cried the golden-haired girl, pronouncing it to rhyme with "cow". "Shaw," I said irritably. "Yes, Show, Show," she went on, "we have not talked of him. I suppose you admire him greatly." "Not very much," I said. "How is that possible?" she asked. "Here we think him your greatest writer, next to Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde." "Next to Oscar Wilde, perhaps, but not to Shakespeare," I snapped; "and now that I re-read him I cannot find traces of any ideas at all. Wells at least had an idea that people would have ideas if they were taught by other people who had some, and was also almost as sublime a controversialist as Voltaire when he met with an irrational fool, but Shaw stands for nothing but a Socialism which has nothing to it except a belief that it would be a nicer world if everybody were all clean and well fed, which is based on no analysis of man and depends on no theory of the State, and an entirely platitudinous denunciation of hypocrisy, which nowhere rises to the level of *Tartuffe*. Of course our country has produced better than Shaw and I found them later, but they are not easy to find, for there is a lack of continuity about our literature. A man starts up in isolation, inspired by an idiosyncratic passion to write about a certain subject, but rarely inspired to read what other people have written about it. That is why French literature is of such service to the mind, since each writer is fully aware of his own culture, and knows when he takes part in an argument precisely to what stage his predecessors have brought it."

"But what is this you are saying about French literature?" interrupted the golden-haired girl. I repeated it, and she exclaimed in amazement, "French literature! But surely all French literature is trivial and artificial?" "Trivial and artificial!" I echoed. "Abelard! Ronsard! Joachim du Bellay! Montaigne! Rabelais! Racine! Pascal! La Fontaine! Voltaire! La Rochefoucauld! Balzac! Baudelaire! Victor Hugo! Benjamin Constant! Proust! And Diderot — did you never read *Le Neveu de Rameau*?" "I do not read French," she said; "hardly any of us learn French. But surely all these people put together do not equal Goethe?" I grieved, for it seemed to me that any one of them had as much to say as Goethe, whose philosophy, indeed, boils down to the opinion, *Ain't Nature grand?* I said, "It is a pity you cannot read Montaigne; he also thought much about nature, though he thought of it not



as grand, but as inevitable." She looked at me as if she thought that was no very great discovery to have made, and I looked back at her, wondering what words would convey to her the virtue that lies in the full acceptance of destiny, realising that my words would convey it to her better than Montaigne's. For there was as yet nothing in her which could appreciate what he meant when he said that nothing in the life of Alexander the Great was so humble and mortal as his whimsical fancy for deification, and that it was no use thinking to leave our humanity behind, for if we walked on stilts we still had to walk on our legs, and there was no way of sitting on the most elevated throne save on the bottom. And I found myself smiling as I remembered how he adds, inconsequently and yet with the most apposite wisdom, that for old people life need not be so realistically conceived, "*Or, la vieillesse a un peu besoin d'être traitée plus tendrement*".

Though I was completely preoccupied as I stared at her face, my eyes eventually pressed some information about it on my mind. I realised that her brows and her cheek-bones were cast in a mould that had become very familiar to me in the past few months, and that she was fair not negatively, like a Nordic woman, but after the fashion of the golden exceptions to the dark races, as if she had been loaded with rich gold pigment. A suspicion made me look at her visiting-card, which I had been twisting between my fingers, and I exclaimed, "But you are not an Austrian! You have a Slav name!" She answered, "I have lived in Vienna nearly all my life," but I did not notice her tone and objected, "All the same you must be Slav by birth." Miserably, shifting in her chair, with the demeanour of a justly accused thief, she said, "Yes! Both my parents are Croats." I was embarrassed by her manner and said, "Well, I suppose you speak Serbo-Croat as well as German and English, and that is another language for your studies." She answered passionately, "No, indeed, I speak not a word of Serbo-Croat. How should I? I am Viennese, I have lived here nearly all my life, I have not been back to Croatia since I was grown-up, except for a few days in Zagreb." "And did you not find the people there very clever?" I asked. "I did not speak to them," she cried scornfully. "I thought it a horrible little town, so provincial." "Are you not at all proud of having Slav blood in you?" I exclaimed. "Why should I

be? What is there to be proud about in being a Slav?" she asked blankly.

Such is the influence that Central Europe exerts on its surroundings. It cut off this girl from pride in her own race, which would have been a pity had her race had much less to be proud of than the superb achievement of defending European civilisation from extinction by the Turks. It cut her off from enlightenment by that French culture which has the advantage over all others of having begun earlier, branching straight from the Roman stem, and having developed most continuously. What it offered her instead was sparse, was recent. It might fairly be defined as Frederick the Great and Goethe. In music it might have offered enough to compensate for all its other lacks, but it had annulled the harmonies of Bach and Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn, by its preference for the false genius, Wagner. It had left this girl flimsy as a jerry-built house with no foundation deeper than the nineteenth century, when loyalty to her Slav blood and adherence to the main current of European culture would have made her heiress to the immense fortune left by the Western and Eastern Roman Empire. Not only Constantine, but this girl and her family, and many others like them, had made this curious choice. Nothing is less true than that men are greedy. Some prefer poverty to wealth, and some even go so far as to prefer death to life. That I was to learn when I returned to England.

This return meant, for me, going into retreat. Nothing in my life had affected me more deeply than this journey through Yugoslavia. This was in part because there is a coincidence between the natural forms and colours of the western and southern parts of Yugoslavia and the innate forms and colours of my imagination. Macedonia is the country I have always seen between sleeping and waking; from childhood, when I was weary of the place where I was, I wished it would turn into a town like Yaitse or Mostar, Bitolj or Ochrid. But my journey moved me also because it was like picking up a strand of wool that would lead me out of a labyrinth in which, to my surprise, I had found myself immured. It might be that when I followed the thread to its end I would find myself faced by locked gates, and that this labyrinth was my sole portion on this earth. But at least I now knew its twists and turns, and what corridor led into what vaulted chamber, and nothing in my life before I went

to Yugoslavia had ever made plain these mysteries. This experience made me say to myself, "If a Roman woman had, some years before the sack of Rome, realised why it was going to be sacked and what motives inspired the barbarians and what the Romans, and had written down all she knew and felt about it, the record would have been of value to historians. My situation, though probably not so fatal, is as interesting." Without doubt it was my duty to keep a record of it.

So I resolved to put on paper what a typical Englishwoman felt and thought in the late nineteen-thirties when, already convinced of the inevitability of the second Anglo-German War, she had been able to follow the dark waters of that event back to its source. That committed me to what was in effect some years of a retreat spent among fundamentals. I was obliged to write a long and complicated history, and to swell that with an account of myself and the people who went with me on my travels, since it was my aim to show the past side by side with the present it created. And while I grappled with the mass of my material during several years, it imposed certain ideas on me.

I became newly doubtful of empires. Since childhood I had been consciously and unconsciously debating their value, because I was born a citizen of one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen, and grew up as its exasperated critic. Never at any time was I fool enough to condemn man for conceiving the imperial theory, or to deny that it had often proved magnificent in practice. In the days when there were striking inequalities among the peoples of the earth, when some were still ignorant of agriculture and the complex process that lies behind the apparent simplicity of nomadism, and were therefore outrageously predatory in their hunger, when some were still candid in their enjoyment of murder, those further advanced must have found the necessity to protect their goods and their lives turn insensibly into a habit of conquest. In those times, also, it could well be that barbarians might possess a metal or a plant for which more cultured peoples had invented a beneficial use, and might refuse them access to it from sheer sullenness; and then, should one hold a communist theory of life and believe that all things are for all people, an attempt to break down that refusal must be approved. It is true that long ago it became untrue that peoples presented any serious damage

because of backwardness ; the threat of savagery has for long lain in technical achievement. For many centuries, too, a war waged by the civilised for access to materials unused by their primitive owners has failed to remain absolutely justifiable for long, since the inequality between the parties involved tempted the stronger to abuse. But if these moral sanctions for imperialism could not be claimed without hypocrisy in its later stages, they then acquired the value of all hypocritical pretences, which is to give a good example. The theory of the British Empire that it existed to bring order into the disordered parts of the earth was more than half humbug, but it inspired to action those in whose love of action there was nothing humbugging. These fought plagues and flood and drought and famine on behalf of the subject races, and instituted law courts where justice, if not actually blind when governors and governed came into conflict, was as a general rule blindfolded. These services might be conceived — though probably nothing could be more irritating to those who were its objects — as chivalrous acts, and those who performed them as *veray parfit gentil* knights. This had the wholly satisfactory result that the common people, proud of their empire and its builders, adopted the standpoint of chivalry.

One evening in London forty years ago, my mother came into my nursery and, all glowing, described how she had been coming home from a tea-party in the central district when she had seen a crowd standing in front of an hotel, obstinately cheering some curtained windows. So long and loudly did they cheer that at last the curtains were drawn, and some bearded men, wooden-faced with bewilderment, bowed out of the brightness into this curious night. They were the Boer generals, come to sign peace after their defeat in the South African War. This scene might be regarded as the apotheosis of complacency, were it not that the spirit which informed it resulted a few years later in the grant to South Africa of a constitution handsomer than vanquished had ever received from victors, and a quarter of a century later in the enactment of the Statute of Westminster, which gave most of the British dependencies the fullest measure of self-government ever conceived possible within an imperial framework. This is a fairer tale than is written on most of history's pages ; and since the English enjoy few moral and intellectual advantages over other

racess, it is unlikely that they alone should be prompted to excellence by the idea of Empire.

But I saw in British imperialism room for roguery and stupidity as well as magnificence. A conquered people is a helpless people ; and if they are of different physical type and another culture from their conquerors they cannot avail themselves of anything like the protection which would otherwise be given them by the current conceptions of justice and humanity. Carlyle, who said he loved God but really worshipped Timurlane, put the economic consequences of this situation in a nutshell when he wrote, in a pamphlet called *The Nigger Question*, that " it is the law of our nature " that the black man " who will not work according to what ability the gods have given him," shall not have " the smallest right to eat pumpkin or to any fraction of land that will grow pumpkin, however plentiful such land may be," but he has " an indisputable and perpetual *right* to be compelled, by the real proprietors of said land, to do competent work for his living : " that is, to work for the white owners of the West Indian sugar plantations. This attitude is even more dangerous than it appears, for if a man has power to make another man work for him against his will, he certainly has power to determine the conditions of this work ; and unless he is a man of the rarest integrity he will see that these conditions keep him rich and his servants amenable. Capitalism at its greediest is thus given its head, and labour is kept brutish, so the general level of civilisation and culture sinks. This must be the tendency of Empire, in so far as it is founded on the occupation of countries settled by another race, and time has not medicined it as might be hoped. Carlyle wrote of a rebellion in Jamaica in 1865 ; because of another rebellion a Commission was appointed to enquire into the condition of West Indian Labour in 1937.

There is also the difficulty, which did much to wreck Rome, of accepting the services of men fitted to govern the wild periphery of Empire without making them persons of influence at its core, where another sort of governors is needed. Soldiers and administrators, who are without limit in patience and understanding when they are dealing with those whom they regard as children, whether these be their subordinates in a service or members of another race, have no time and no bent for learning the different method appropriate to dealing with

those who are their equals in race and before the law. It therefore seems to them that the first thing to do before society can be put on a proper basis is to exaggerate all social inequalities, and to this end, which may be wholly irrelevant to the actual social problems confronting them or to the tradition of their people's culture, they will sacrifice all other considerations. Thus it was that the later Roman emperors destroyed the structure built up by the old Romans, which gave the citizen considerable freedom in exchange for his submission to the essential discipline of the State, until they themselves felt wholly alien from Rome, and visited the city only for a few days of their reign, or perhaps not at all. Thus it is that "Poona", which is the name of a city in the Bombay presidency, is used, half in jest and wholly in earnest, to convey a reactionary strain in politics which could not be associated with the name of any English district.

In contemplating Yugoslavia these disadvantages of Empire are manifest. I can think of no more striking relic of a crime than the despoilment of Macedonia and Old Serbia, where the Turks for five hundred and fifty years robbed the native population till they got them down to a point beyond which the process could not be carried any further without danger of leaving no victims to be robbed in the future. The poverty of all Bosnians and Herzegovinians, except the Moslems and the Jews, is as ghastly an indictment of both the Turks and their successors, the Austrians. Dalmatia was picked clean by Venice. Croatia has been held back from prosperity by Hungarian control in countless ways that have left it half an age behind its Western neighbours in material prosperity. Never in the Balkans has Empire meant trusteeship. At least, there are such trustees, but they end in jail. The South Slavs have also suffered extremely from the inability of empires to produce men who were able both to conquer territory and to administer it. This does not apply to the portions that belonged to Austria and Venice, for these powers never conquered them and acquired them by the easier method of huckstering diplomacy; but it is the keynote of the Turkish symphony. In Sir Charles Eliot's profound book, *Turkey in Europe*, he says of the Turks that if "they quoted from the Bible instead of the Koran, no words would better characterise their manner of life than 'Here have we no continuing city'", and describes a room in a Turkish house as

"generally scrupulously clean, but bare and unfurnished", to such a degree that a European would be bound to believe that "a party of travellers have occupied an old barn and said, 'Let us make the place clean enough to live in; it's no use taking any more trouble about it. We shall probably be off again in a week.' " Nothing could be more proper than this disregard for comfort, this refusal to relax, so long as these men were conquerors in the act of extending and confirming their conquests. But in the administrators of a vast territory this meant sluttish disorder, poverty, disease and ignorance. It meant, above all, that the tax-collector milked the lands each year as if this were to be his last extortion before they were abandoned by an army that must always press forward. Here and there individual Slavs were saved by the only foreign missionary which has ever benefited the Balkans: the Oriental love of pleasure. Here and there Turks pleased their sensuousness by surrounding themselves with poplar groves, fountains, and prosperous Christian neighbours who also learned to be sensuous. Dalmatia derives an exceptional benefit from that Frenchman of unappreciated excellence, Marmont; he too spread about him his sensuousness as oil upon troubled waters. But he was overruled by his master Napoleon, who proved the rule and could not keep in peace what he had gained in war.

The contemplation of Yugoslavia suggests other, and catastrophic, aspects of Empire. Certain doubts as to the efficacy of the imperial system as an aid to civilisation past any exceedingly primitive phase had arisen in my mind when I was writing an essay on the life of St. Augustine. Africa, it had seemed to me, would have been considerably happier if Balbus had never built a wall. Those doubts were immensely reinforced by my Yugoslavian researches. The Dalmatian coast is one side of a coffin. Within lies dead Illyria: a great kingdom which was slain by the Roman Empire in the name of a civilising mission. The Illyrians were drunken, the Romans said priggishly, not knowing what Suetonius was going to do with their own fair fame; they were pirates, they could not maintain safety on their high-roads. But if a bandit robbed and murdered a family and afterwards declared them to be of such disgusting character that he had fulfilled a public duty in annihilating them, we should hesitate to believe him, particularly if there were any evidence to the contrary. Here there was much.

Illyria held up its head among the Eastern powers whom Rome never equalled in subtlety or splendour ; Alexander the Great, beside whom any Roman shows as mediocre, was three parts Illyrian ; and after the Illyrians had been conquered they produced many men who, intervening in Roman affairs, dwarfed all their contemporaries of Italian birth. It is therefore not possible to believe the Roman version.

Checked by the clock, the conquest of Illyria cannot be justified. It took two hundred and fifty years of open warfare, followed by fifty years of rebellion and pacification, to procure a peace that lasted only a hundred years. But this peace was maintained only by gifted Illyrians who were obliged to take over the management of the decrepit imperial machine and were therefore exercising their ability under a handicap to which they might not have been subjected in a free Illyria. Moreover, even their gifts were rendered unavailing by a catastrophe directly due to Empire. The barbarian invasions which brought the empire to a standstill and sank much of European civilisation without trace, swept westwards over the continent at the pace of a flame. This might not have been so if they had encountered the close-knit opposition of states whose political administration corresponded with their racial and economic frontiers. But all such states had been destroyed by Rome. In their place had been established a flabby federation of peoples long demoralised by subordination to an alien control itself rendered highly inefficient by political and economic and military misfortunes. The Mongols had only to touch such peoples to knock them over.

This is a hypothesis and no more : but its probability can be judged by our knowledge of Africa, with its much more documented history. Rome destroyed Punic civilisation because it had not yet arrived at the conception of trade and could not understand that a rival might also be a customer, and because it wanted North Africa as its granary. It gave as bad an account of this victim as of Illyria, and not more credibly. For here, too, the vanquished race took over the victors' business. The Illyrian line of Roman emperors known as the *Restitutores Mundi* were remarkable ; but the African Fathers preserved the Christian Church with the salt of genius when it might have perished with the rest of society, and thus it secured the continuity of Western culture. Through the greatest of the African Christians, St.



Augustine, we know how it was with these gifted people and their fertile land when the barbarians came. North Africa had not been allowed to lead her own economic life, and had been organised as a cell in the Roman Empire; when its host fell into bankruptcy it was itself infected with financial decay. Property became useless owing to the intolerable burden of imperial taxation, and the Church was embarrassed by the number of estates handed over to it by owners incapable of bearing their responsibility. Many of the artisans and labourers were so poor that they ran mad and joined bands of wandering sectaries who combined religious frenzy with suicidal mania. The news of this collapse travelled southwards, and tribesmen crept up from the dark heart of the continent to gnaw at the edge of civilisation, immensely aided by the circumstance that the empire was then split by a feud between a spindling emperor and his domineering sister, which split again into an intricate series of feuds between several military factions. The Governor of North Africa, an unhappy man named Boniface, of whom we know a great deal, was unable to find out to what authority he owed his fealty. He was thus forced into the position of a rebel, and two Roman armies had been sent against him when the Vandals launched their attack on the bedevilled provinces. There, with the help of the many elements which were distracted by misgovernment, they established easily enough the state of ruin which has persisted in these parts, save for a brief period of Islamic culture, throughout the subsequent fifteen hundred years. Thus the idea of Empire is rendered suspect on the territory where it seems to have most justified itself. In modern Africa the phrase "the white man's burden" is far from being ironical: countless Europeans have given their lives to save Africans from such ills as sleeping sickness and the slave-trade. But it is dubious whether this missionary service would ever have been required if spontaneous African culture had not been hamstrung by the Roman Empire.

It is possible that Rome destroyed far more human achievement than she ever fostered. By Byzantium the Balkans were given much, but that was only when the Western Empire had fallen upon difficult days, when aggression was a half-forgotten dream, so unremitting was the need for defence. It is certain that the Balkans lost more from contact with all modern empires than they ever gained. They belonged to the sphere of

tragedy, and Empire cannot understand the tragic. Great Britain was useless to them, except for Mr. Gladstone, who would have been shocked if he had known the truth about the Christian rebels, who therefore pretended they were other than they were, and who by that hypocrisy served the truth; and except for certain noble women, such as Miss Irby, who travelled with her friend, Miss Muir Mackenzie, all through Macedonia when this was a dangerous enterprise, told the truth about Turkish maladministration, and afterwards started a school for Christians in Sarajevo where fortitude was among the subjects taught. But Englishmen have usually been foolish about the Peninsula, being imbued with the imperialist idea that it is good to have and therefore apt to draw the false conclusion that those who have not are not good. The nineteenth-century English traveller tended to form an unfavourable opinion of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire on the grounds that they were dirty and illiterate and grasping (as poor people, oddly enough, often are) and cringing and inhospitable and ill-mannered (as frightened people, oddly enough, often are). He condemned them as he condemned the inhabitants of the new industrial hells in Lancashire and Yorkshire, who insisted on smelling offensively, drinking gin to excess, and being rough and rude. Even as he felt glad when these unfortunate fellow-countrymen of his were the objects of missionary efforts by philanthropists drawn from the upper and middle classes, he felt glad because these Christian Slavs were in the custody of the Turks, who were exquisite in their personal habits, cultivated, generous, dignified, hospitable and extremely polite. His gladness felt a cold check when the Turkish Empire collapsed. Philanthropists should not go bankrupt. But in the twentieth century his grandsons transferred their enthusiasm to the Russian and Austrian Empires, and regretted that one or the other was not custodian of the Balkans. Even after the war, which showed both these great powers soft as rotten apples, and the Serbs as strong in the saving of European civilisation, many Englishmen lamented that the Balkan peoples were not under the tutelage of the charming, cultured Austrians.

How strange a dream it was, it is, that the Southern Slavs should be reared to civilisation by Russia! The Old Russia was not even a true empire, she was not even a modern state, she was rather a symbol of immense spiritual value but of little

material efficacy, by which millions of people, scattered over vast and alienating territories, and bruised beyond belief by past defeat, were able to believe that they were taking part in the drama by which man shall discover the meaning of his extraordinary destiny. Nothing had ever enabled these people to recover from the disorganisation inflicted on them by the Mongol tribe known as the Golden Horde, who occupied their country for nearly two hundred years, and cut them off from the Byzantine Empire in its paradoxical apotheosis, when it was a dying and a fecundating power. During this long night the land fell into confusion, and though there have emerged from it some colossal geniuses, compact of fire and smoke, to prove the value of the stock, few of them have had the appropriate quality of nursemaids. There could have been nothing more fantastic than the idea of handing over the wretched victims of the Turks, who needed above all else tranquillity and order and their own way, to the care of the Russians, who themselves had been plunged by Asiatic influence into a permanent and impassioned state of simultaneous anarchy and absolutism: nothing, save the idea of handing them over to the Austrian Empire.

It is difficult to write the plain truth about the Austrian Empire as any historian not a Roman Catholic propagandist knows it. The lilacs and chestnuts of Vienna, the gilded staircases and crystal chandeliers of its baroque palaces, its divine musicians, great and little, have confused the judgment of the world; but a defence of the Japanese Empire which relied largely on its cherry blossoms and pagodas and the prints of Hiroshige would not convince. It is delightful to drink the heuriger wine in the gardens of Grinzing, but all the same Mr. Gladstone was not speaking intemperately when he said that he knew nothing good of Austria. It represented just as much of the German people as could be organised into unity. The rest of them were too quarrelsome and unaware of any reason to prefer harmony to disharmony to sink their local differences, and it is probable that the Austrians would have remained in the same state had it not been for the threat of Turkish invasion. They were witless and careless to a degree that can be judged by their tolerance of the Hapsburgs as their rulers, century after century.

This family, from the unlucky day in 1273 when the College of Electors chose Rudolf of Hapsburg to be King of the Romans

on account of his mediocrity, till the abdication of Charles I in 1918, produced no genius, only two rulers of ability in Charles V and Maria Theresa, countless dullards, and not a few imbeciles and lunatics. While they were responsible for Germany they lost it Switzerland and plunged it into the misery, from which it has never wholly recovered, of the Thirty Years War ; they brought on Spain a ruin that seems likely to endure for all time ; they made their names spell infamy in the Netherlands. If in Austria they appeared to have been successful in driving back the Turks, it is because they had developed a certain technical ability in the course of generations spent in organising failures and afterwards retaining their thrones, and were thus able to procure foreign generals, such as Eugène of Savoy and John Sobieski, to lead foreign troops against the invaders. Their actions were again and again horrible : the campaign by which the Emperor Ferdinand converted his largely Protestant dominions to solid Roman Catholicism was one of the most hideous in history. The very beauty of Vienna was a testimony of the gulf between the rulers and their people. For Austria is not naturally rich ; too much of it is mountainous, and too much is agricultural land ill-served by communications. It could afford these baroque palaces only by the most merciless exploitation of its peasants and artisans. To do the Hapsburgs justice, they made no hypocritical pretence that they paid any undue regard to the interests of their people. "He may be a patriot for Austria," the Emperor Franz Josef cynically enquired concerning a politician who had been recommended to him as a possible Minister on the ground of his patriotism, "but is he a patriot for me ?"

The Hapsburgs and their people alike were at their worst in their relations with the alien races of their empire. Austria annexed Hungary after the Turks had been driven out, and never learned either to work in amity with it or to coerce it. It lost its Italian possessions by sheer brutality and administrative incompetence. And it was still entirely uncritical of a two-fold passion that had raged in the German bosom since earliest times. "The Slavs," the Saxons were informed by a manifesto of their princes and bishops in the eleventh century, "are an abominable people, but their land is very rich in flesh, honey, grain and herds, and it abounds in all crops when it is cultivated, so that none can be compared to it. So say they who know.

Thus, you can both save your souls and acquire the best of land to live in." Eight hundred years later, Bismarck, when he was revising the Treaty of Berlin, was seized with fury at the sight of one clause, and ran his pencil through it again and again, because it safeguarded the rights of the Kutzo-Vlachs, an in-offensive people whom he falsely believed to be Slav; he then continued to draft the treaty to the end of delivering the Balkans up to the hungry maw of the Austrian people.

This was the most persistent, the most vivid strain in the German character. It reconciled the German Austrians to admitting the Hungarians to equality within the empire by the Dual Monarchy, for the Hungarians also hated the Slavs and would not forget to use their independent power in harrying the Croats and Serbs within their borders. "You look after your barbarians," the Hungarian statesman, Andrassy, assured the Austrian Chancellor, Beust, "and we will look after ours." A great part of Austrian internal political life was given to naïve assertions of the German Austrian's inalienable right to enjoy every sort of favouritism at the expense of his Slav fellow-subjects. When it was ordained that German civil servants working in Czech districts must learn Czech, thus putting them on a parity with Czech civil servants, who were obliged to know German, all German Austrians revolted and their representatives obstructed all parliamentary business till the ordinances were withdrawn. This is the only positive feature in the political life of nineteenth-century Vienna. That age was not noble anywhere, since then the ignorance of townsmen, who must inevitably be very ignorant unless they are very learned, lay as a thickening shadow on human thought, but in Vienna it was even less noble than in the rest of Europe. There was manifest a clericalism that was seven-eighths political obscurantism of a childish type: the class greed of a bureaucracy far too numerous for the country's resources: a Liberalism that represented nothing more than the opposition of the industrialists and bankers and lawyers to the landowners; and a Christian Socialism which was anti-Semitic and dedicated to the protection of the *Spießbürger*, the mediocrity who despises the working man but has not the wit to attach himself to the more fortunate classes, and cries out to be hoisted up into a position of privilege by party action. This latter was Nazi-ism without that audacity which is its only handsome attribute. The automatism with

which the Hapsburgs carried on their inherited tradition of external order made them control this movement so that it never had a leader more objectionable than the famous Mayor of Vienna, Dr. Karl Lueger, who, though he was barren of any ideas save hatred and greed, acted within the limits to which the bourgeoisie then confined themselves. But the dynamic force of that and all other Viennese movements was loathing of the Slavs.

So much I had read in books. But in Yugoslavia I saw with my own eyes the German hatred of the Slavs : as a scar on the Slav peoples, in the chattering distraction of Croatia, and the lacerated moral beauty of Bosnia ; as an abscess on a German soul, when Gerda looked on the seven thousand French graves at Bitolj and wounded a husband who had treated her with infinite tenderness by saying sourly, " To think of all those people giving their lives for a lot of Slavs ; " as a womb swollen with murder, in the German war memorial at Bitolj. For the first time I knew the quality of the parties to this feud. I saw the solemn and magnificent embroideries of the Slav peasant women and knew what degeneration of skill and taste was represented by the bright little flowers and hearts on the Austrian belts that the skiers like to bring back from St. Anton. I saw the Serbs, who make more sombre expeditions than open-air meals at little restaurants in the Wiener Wald, who go in pilgrimage to the Frushka Gora and see defeat itself in the person of the Tsar Lazar, laid in a golden shroud : it is headless, as defeat should be, since it is a frustration of personality, but its hands are preserved, as is fitting, for it is the hand that is the sign of humanity, that distinguishes man from all other animals, and it is conflict with defeat that divides human beings from the natural world. I saw the Serbs, to whom the subjects of the Hapsburgs could certainly teach nothing. Twice the Serbs drove their would-be teachers out of Serbia, and being vanquished the third time, not so much by arms but by sickness and famine, fled through icy mountains to the sea, rested for a little space, then fought them a fourth time, and were victorious. Such is not the proper relationship between pupil and professor. I saw in Yugoslavia many people such as the mother of the idiot child at the tomb of Sveti Naum who said to us, " I don't know what to say to God about this, there's so much to say, I don't know where to begin, it's such

a strange thing to have happened," and the old woman who walked on the mountain road in Montenegro, asking the skies, "If I had to live, why should my life have been like this?" There were others, such as Militsa, who is a poet and a scholar and a woman of the world, yet recognisably the sister of these women, to prove that they were not merely exhibiting a pristine excellence preserved by the lack of use, that their subtlety was no superficial bloom which would be brushed away by their first contact with modern civilisation, that their stuff was of the sort that can achieve what is most cause for pride among human achievement. I knew that few Austrians had shown the degree of sensibility that would enable them to instruct such people, and that it would not have mattered if there had been few or many of them, for they would have recognised that people like these have no need to be instructed by other human beings, but can learn for themselves.

I said to myself quite often, as I wrestled with the material of this book, that now what was well would at last happen. For the old Turkey had gone and its successor had no interest in Empire, and Russia was a Union of Soviet Republics, and the Hapsburgs were fallen; and the treaties of Versailles and Trianon and St. Germain had set the small peoples free. Freedom was for these peoples an ecstasy. That I knew to be true, for I had seen it with my own eyes. Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Czecho-Slovakia and Yugoslavia, they were all like young men stretching themselves at the open window in the early morning after long sleep. To eat in a public place in these countries, to walk in their public gardens, was to fill the nostrils with the smell of happiness. Nothing so fair has happened in all history as this liberation of peoples who, during centuries of oppression, had never forgotten their own souls, and by long brooding on their national lives had changed them from transitory experience to lasting and inspiring works of art. It is not even imaginable what they would have achieved, had they been given time to acquire the technique of self-government, for though there are free peoples, and these have contributed largely to civilisation, they have been free because they were fortunate, and have not, like the Slavs and the Finns and the Balts, learned that wisdom which "is sold in the desolate market where none comes to buy, And in the withered fields where the farmer ploughs for bread in vain."

It surprised me that many Englishmen and Americans, who professed to be benevolently concerned with the future of man, were not in the least exalted by this prospect. The Left Wing, especially, was sharply critical of the new states and all that they did. This was inconsistent in those who believed, often to a point far beyond the practical, that the individual must be free to determine his own destiny, and it was partly due to a theory, so absurd that not even its direct opposite has any chance of being true, that nationalism is always anti-democratic and aggressive, and that internationalism is always liberal and pacific. Yet nationalism is simply the determination of a people to cultivate its own soul, to follow the customs bequeathed to it by its ancestors, to develop its traditions according to its own instincts. It is the national equivalent of the individual's determination not to be a slave. The fulfilment of both those determinations is essentially a part of the Left programme. But the liberation of an individual or a people may lead to all sorts of different consequences, according to their different natures. The nationalisms of Hungary and Ireland have always been intense, but Hungary has always been industrially ambitious and resolute both in maintaining a feudal land system and in oppressing the aliens within her frontiers, while Ireland, though she desires to annihilate Ulster, wishes to be a peasant state with industries well within manageable proportions. It was extremely probable that all the countries liberated by the Peace Treaties would tend to be liberal, since their populations had long been in active revolt against the absolutism of Russia, Turkey and Austria-Hungary, and indeed, considering the difficult conditions they had inherited, their practice kept close to liberalism. Nevertheless the Left Wing regarded these new states with the utmost suspicion, and if they visited them immediately allied themselves with the opposition parties, even if these were extremely reactionary. Thus I was often surprised, when I spoke of Yugoslavia to Bloomsbury intellectuals, themselves free-thinking and Marxist, to find them expressing the warmest sympathy with the Catholic Croats, even those of a far more reactionary cast than Matchek's followers.

Any discussion of these points was complicated by the tendency of these intellectuals to use the words "nationalism" and "imperialism" as if they meant the same thing. It is fair to say that three out of four times that English and American



authors write of French nationalism they are thinking of French imperialism ; these are two distinct strands in the life of France. Napoleon was a French imperialist, but he was completely detached from French nationalism, which was natural enough, as he was not a Frenchman ; and Charles Péguy was the flower of French nationalism, but was actively hostile to French imperialism. But not all talk on this subject rose even to the high level of this confusion. As the state of Europe grew worse innumerable people, most of them Americans, sighed, " Ah, it's the fault of these small nations," and had not the faintest idea what they meant when they said it. They cannot have thought it was really the small nations that were shaking the mailed fist, and indeed when they were pressed they fell back on allegations that the small nations had impeded the free flow of European trade by the tariff barriers within which they enclosed themselves. But the Scandinavian and Baltic countries offered no ground whatsoever for this justification, and if the Balkan countries had never formed a Danubian federation, it was because Italy, with the intention of keeping these countries weak so that it might some day seize them, saw to it at conference after conference that they were forbidden to form any such association.

All this campaign against the small new states was inchoate, and uninformed to a point well below the general level of the people who took part in it. They must have had some prejudice against them ; and this I found astonishing, for if there is an assurance in the Europe of our day that sometimes life goes well, a promise that some day it may go better, it is offered by these countries. I cannot but think it exhilarating, from the point of view of both the Turks and the Slavs, that the Turkish tax-collector no longer beggars the peasants on the Skoplje hills and plains for the benefit of a pasha whom the Turkish peasant also had no cause to love, and this was but one example of the supersession of the disagreeable by what was at least more agreeable, which I assumed was desired by all reasonable human beings. But I remembered, and both the art of the Byzantine frescoes and the speculation that underlies all but the most trivial of Slav conversations confirm my remembrance, that human beings are not reasonable, and do not to any decisive degree prefer the agreeable to the disagreeable. Only part of us is sane : only part of us loves pleasure and the longer day of

happiness, wants to live to our nineties and die in peace, in a house that we built, that shall shelter those who come after us. The other half of us is nearly mad. It prefers the disagreeable to the agreeable, loves pain and its darker night despair, and wants to die in a catastrophe that will set back life to its beginnings and leave nothing of our house save its blackened foundations. Our bright natures fight in us with this yeasty darkness, and neither part is commonly quite victorious, for we are divided against ourselves and will not let either part be destroyed. This fight can be observed constantly in our personal lives. There is nothing rarer than a man who can be trusted never to throw away happiness, however eagerly he sometimes grasps it. In history we are as frequently interested in our own doom. Sometimes we search for peace, sometimes we make an effort to find convenient frontiers and a proper fulfilment for racial destinies ; but sometimes we insist on war, sometimes we stamp into the dust the only foundations on which we can support our national lives. We ignore this suicidal strain in history because we are consistently bad artists when we paint ourselves, we prettify our wills and pretend they are not part-coloured before the Lord. We pretend that the Thirty Years War disappointed the hope of those who engineered it because it brought famine to Central Europe, famine so extreme that whole villages were given over to silence and the spreading weed, so extreme that bands of desperate men waylaid travellers and ate their flesh. Yet perhaps these engineers of war did not like villages, and felt queasy at the thought of a society enjoying wholesome meals. It seems that, choked with our victory in the last war, we now have an appetite for defeat. The new states were full of life, Yugoslavia shook its clenched fists and swore it meant to live. Therefore England and America and France turned away, for what lived disgusted them ; they wanted a blanched world, without blood, given over to defeat.

They would not interfere, therefore, with the marginal activity that ran parallel to the continuous national effort which I was chronicling. From time to time out of the text there emerged little black figures which postured on the white paper beside it, achieved a group which was magical, an incantation to death, and ran back again into the text, which carried on its story of the main and legitimate historical process.

Till then there had been a certain detachment between these

irregular abandonments of the legal process and the large movement of history. The black little figures rushed out of the text and made their magic mark in the margin and disappeared ; and the stout column of the text continued as before, only betraying by a later variation from the expected that the magic had been efficacious. The development of the nineteenth century was certainly affected to a slight degree, almost invisible save to the specialist eye, by the assassination of Prince Danilo of Montenegro, and to a more marked degree by the assassination of Prince Michael of Serbia ; and when Alexander and Draga were murdered and Peter Karageorgevitch came to the throne, the map of Europe seemed to have been repainted in brighter and more discordant colours. But Danilo's death did not make my great-grandmother cry ; I doubt if my grandfather was ever reminded by discomfort that Prince Michael of Serbia had left this earth ; I did not eat different food or wear different clothes because of Alexander and Draga, or think different thoughts. The *attentat* at Sarajevo had a totally different effect. Its magical operation on the text was immediate. I and nearly all women in Europe wept times without number, said again and again, " Ah, that is because of the war," and learned to eat against hunger, to dress for warmth, to think not for amusement but to find the clue out of the maze. We were marked by an impersonal event as deeply as by any of the classic stages of the personal life. And after the darkness of the contending armies cleared from Europe it could be seen that the map had been painted yet once more, in colours still more brilliant, which were also harmonious.

It might have been that the eye of the future should see Europe for some space of time as a pale West like a fading fresco painted by genius, a troubled and writhing German people, a barricaded and preoccupied Russia, and a chaplet of shining small countries, delighting in life as intense as human society has ever known. But there was an intractable element that would not be satisfied with this dispensation

The Sarajevo *attentat* represented three of the dominant factors in history. Princip was inspired by nationalism ; the Austrian officers who let Princip have his way were imperialists ; the parties to the other *attentat*, which was not committed because Princip forestalled it, were children of " Apis ", lovers of slaughter for its own sake. But there was one important

factor in modern times which had no share in the *attentat*, and no part in the satisfaction that followed the peace, though it had had no part in the satisfaction that preceded it—the mindless, traditionless, possessionless section of the urban proletariat which had sent Luccheni as its representative to murder the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, but which, largely owing to the site of the crime, had no say in the murder of Franz Ferdinand. Its interests were therefore not specifically raised by the war that ensued, and they were curiously neglected after it. The new age was eager for reforms and was not niggardly in paying for them, but it made no drastic reorganisation of the social system. This was partly due to the supineness of the Left Wing. They are the proper people to make any revolution; it is their trade. But they were too busy discussing the distant Bolshevik experiment in Russia to have the time or energy to work out their local salvation. This gave the revolutionaries of the Right Wing their chance.

Mindless, traditionless, possessionless, Mussolini came to power. Italy was predestined to be the first country in the world to hand its destiny over to a member of this class, for though France had a large urban population it had an inveterate tendency not to be mindless. Great Britain had strong traditions, and the United States had possessions, while Italy had many peasants who had been industrialised for a generation or so without becoming cultured, had lost the tradition of its small states without acquiring a new national one, and was very poor. Mussolini was its predestined leader, for while he had not sufficient intelligence to lift him out of this class, he had not too little to acquire some knowledge of the theory and practice of social revolution from an apprenticeship to the Left. If he had achieved his rulership in times of peace he would have sought to commit some act of violence that would provoke a war; since his hour came when the whole world was sick with a surfeit of armies that programme was manifestly ill-timed, so he had to find some method of applying violence to peace-time. He retrieved, whether from the half-comprehended talk of a clever comrade or by skimming a volume in the threepenny box outside the bookshop, the Code of Diocletian; and being either unaware or careless that Diocletian had perished of despair in his palace at Split, because he had failed to check the descent of ruin on the Roman earth, he enforced that Code on his

country. This was a comical venture. For Diocletian had some excuse for seeking to stabilise by edict the institutions of an empire that had lasted for over a thousand years, but it was imbecile to attempt to fix the forms of a country that had been unified for less than a century and was deeply involved in a world economic system which was no older than the industrial revolution.

Mussolini, indeed, rested his case for the revival of the Code on nothing so acceptable to the high faculties of man as its capacity to further well-being. He recommended it because it had to be applied by violence, which he alleged to be the highest thing in life. But in peace the opportunities for violence are limited and not remunerative. He had to resort to war. He had taught his followers to enjoy the taste of assault, and he had to satisfy this appetite by promising them the wide mass murder of a European conflict; he had raised their material standards by lavish expenditure on social services the state could not afford, and he had to placate their new greed by promising them sea-power like Britain's and an empire in Asia and Africa. The first step towards any of these ends was the destruction of Yugoslavia. Its Dalmatian coast was necessary if he were to have command of the Adriatic; through its hinterland ran the high-road to Asia. But he lacked the heart for fair fighting. Traditionless, he had not learned what all but the most primitive communities have learned, that it is better for both parties to a conflict if there is no treachery on either side. He therefore strove to win his battle beforehand by fomenting revolution among Yugoslavian nationals in Croatia and Macedonia. But there he made an error. Belonging to the bored and under-employed urban class which is always glad of the excitement of a street fight, he could not understand that peasants quickly tire of guerilla bands trailing backwards and forwards over their lands, interrupting work vitally necessary to a good harvest. So he looked north, to Austria.

Vienna still stands. That is to say, it is as it was. A great town engenders its tradition, which cannot be destroyed, because it is sown through the brains and loins of all men born within it or under its shadow, and because it determines the form of local customs and thus for ever afterwards constrains those who enter it from other parts to its way of living. So it was with Constantinople, which was made by the Byzantines in the image

of their magnificent dreams, which imposed those dreams on the Turks, of wholly alien natural genius, who drove out the Byzantines. So it is with Vienna.

That city seemed at first to accept the destiny it had thrust on itself by its provocation of war. Henceforth it had to be poor ; for it had always been that by nature. Only the merciless exploitation of its peasants and its Slav subjects had enabled it to support the extravagance of its aristocracy, the solid comfort of its bourgeoisie. But in its diminishment it might have known an age as great as its own eighteenth century had it reconciled itself to being a small town without vainglory but glorious in its university and its opera, its baroque palaces and art galleries, its lilacs and chestnuts, its abundance of Jewish genius. It could not, however, check the tradition which had struck its roots deeper and deeper during the nineteenth century, which was growing rankly among the ruins of Vienna and was even spreading rankly through another soil.

For this tradition had found its perfect instrument in Adolf Hitler. It must always be remembered that Hitler is not a German but an Austrian, and nothing he has brought to post-war Germany had not its existence in pre-war Austria. There is nothing original in his daemonic fancies save their intensity. He is a man of the same class as Luccheni and Mussolini, a recruit to the hopeless and helpless urban proletariat ; and like them he is mindless and possessionless, and, so far as the human tradition goes, traditionless. He did not know why the difficult and sometimes dangerous process of thinking is held in esteem ; he did not know that fourteen hundred years before an emperor had proclaimed that a ruler " must be not only glorified with arms, but also armed with laws," and that all communities have been forced to hold that opinion or perish ; he had not an inkling that it is actually healthy for the human race to prefer what is agreeable to what is disagreeable. He was a poor craftsman, with no pride in his craft, which was natural enough in the child of one of those parasites on our social system, a douanier. But what he had heard in his childhood lingered in his ears. His father's native village was only a few miles from the family estate of Schönerer, who founded the Pan-German movement that excited Vienna at the end of the last century, and there is nothing in *Mein Kampf* which was not in Schönerer's programme. There is the same racial

pride, the same anti-Semitism, the same hatred of the Slavs, the same hostility to the Church. Schönerer's movement was, however, stultified by his determination to find his followers among the educated classes. There was a hair-splitting tendency in those who had been exposed to culture which rendered them unable to admire the simplicity and strength of this platform, in which every plank was cut from hatred or vanity. Two leaders, neither of them peasants or workmen, both bureaucrats, recognised that the only hope for their faith lay in spreading it among the Caliban class of urban workers who were outside the trade unions. They started a German Socialist Workers' Party, almost indistinguishable in programme from the Nazi Party, which held three seats in the Austrian Parliament of 1911. Hitler is simply an exporter of Austrian goods, which he sells with an energy due to the dynamic passion for blood which is his special idiosyncrasy. For the pleasure he takes in murder is so great that "Apis" now seems a moderate man who sometimes stamped his foot when annoyed.

Hitler, however, was working out his destiny in Germany, and there was no such dramatic figure in Vienna; but only the old actors conscientiously performing the same comedy on the themes of extravagance and *Schlamperei*. The financiers and industrialists acted their parts with such zest that they not only brought down their own house on their heads, they shattered the economic structure of the whole world. The collapse of the Credit Anstalt in 1931 caused the German crisis which perpetuated the world slump of 1929. These proceedings were unchecked by the political forces of the town which was as frivolous and factious as it had ever been. The Left Wing produced some devoted and even saintly trade unionists and too many adherents to the type of international socialism which unfits its disciples for dealing with local problems. All alike were feckless and unaware that when a socialist elected authority spends money as if socialism were already established, although it is not yet strong enough to overthrow capitalism, it provokes a formidable reaction. The Right Wing was what might have been expected from a community which was still capable of looking over its teacups and saying to a foreign visitor, "Can you tell me if Mr. So-and-so belongs to the first or second rank of English society?" The only hope for Austrian independence lay in comradeship with the Danubian states, who might have

formed with her a solid block of defiant young nations, ready to face the rising forces of Nazi-ism and Fascism, with their backs against an even more defiant Russia and Turkey. But Austria was still sneering at all peoples to her East, still vaunting herself as "the frontier of Europe". She looked West for her salvation, and when, like the rest of the world, she tumbled into the pit of the slump, she conceived a sick fancy that all her troubles would be ended if she were joined in a Customs union with Germany. This, with a good sense that has been more than justified by the subsequent course of history, was forbidden by the powers as a threat to European peace; but in any case it was useless as a prescription for Austria's economic malady, for Germany was as sick as she was, and two states which are bankrupt for precisely similar reasons are not more solvent than one. Some of the Right Wing politicians were aware of this, but there was nothing shrewd in their awareness. Though desirous of independence, when the time came they fomented this desire for union with imperialist and internationalist Nazi-ism, or else inspired their followers with an equally suicidal enthusiasm for imperialist and internationalist Fascism. To these insane impulses they sacrificed everything: honour, decency, humanity, and that other thing which a man sacrifices when he fails in these qualities towards the people of his own blood. The smoke curled up from a peculiar offering of this sort in February 1934.

One of the most typical features of post-war Vienna were the working-class tenements, built by the Government of Vienna, which was as far Left as the National Government was Right. These large buildings presented a modern and rationalist appeal to visitors who were already seduced by the lilacs and chestnuts of the Viennese gardens; and anywhere the sceptic who looks a housing scheme in the mouth is sure to be denounced as a hard-hearted wrctch who grudges poor children a decent home. But the truth is that these tenements were a shocking extravagance for a ruined city. For they were not needed. Though the Vienna of the Hapsburgs had been disfigured by abominable slums, the shrinkage in the population made it unnecessary for the poor to inhabit them any longer. They had simply to move up into the accommodation their former masters had vacated. There were acres of villas built, and well built, for the bourgeoisie and upper classes, which now stood in



neglected gardens, either unoccupied or occupied by owners who had to starve to pay the taxes. These villas could easily have been subdivided and the gardens cut up into allotments for the new tenants. But instead they were left to decay, and the Town Council of this distressed and dwindling city spent over fourteen million pounds in building sixty thousand flats in the form of isolated blocks containing anything up to seventeen hundred families. A state still carrying on under the capitalist system should not have diverted so large a sum from industry in so short a time : the unemployment rate mounted in direct ratio to these lofty buildings. It is, moreover, extremely doubtful whether families should be encouraged to live in apartments if there is enough ground in the neighbourhood to permit them roomier accommodation with gardens ; and these apartments were extremely small. Though there was no measure in the fascination they exercised on foreigners, they were in point of fact inferior to many similar working-class tenements in Holland and Scandinavia ; and though they were infinitely superior to most English pre-war dwellings of the kind, they fell below the standards applied to our housing schemes during the last twenty-five years.

It is said that the motives which inspired the Viennese municipal authorities to build these blocks were not simple. To be accepted as a tenant the citizen had to satisfy certain tests which in fact guaranteed him as a Social Democrat ; if he followed a trade he had to be a trade unionist. Thus these apartments put solid blocks of Socialist voters into various districts that might otherwise have returned Right Wing representatives. If this be true, then the Karl Marx Hof and the Goethe Hof rival the Tower of Babel in architectural irony. For in February 1934 there was again an abandonment of the slow legitimate process of civilised existence, a resort to action too swift and too immediate in its logic to be the work of wisdom. Again black figures run out of the text of history and inscribe a magic character in the margin. The Austrian Chancellor, Dollfuss, was a fervent Catholic, Austrian nationalist and agrarian protectionist, and he hated the atheism, the imperialism and the economic programme of Hitler. He therefore secretly called on Mussolini for aid, and became virtually an instrument of Italian policy. So too did Prince Starhemberg, a wealthy aristocrat, who had been an early accomplice of Hitler, had

turned against him, and was now head of a semi-Fascist armed band called the Heimwehr or the Home Guard, which was supporting Dollfuss. In January 1934 it looked as if Dollfuss and Starhemberg were about to be forced by difficult internal conditions to come to a working agreement with the Social Democrats; and indeed the Left Government then holding office in France had extracted from them definite promises that they should do so. But in the middle of January Mussolini sent a message to Dollfuss to say that the Social Democrats must not be conciliated but destroyed. It unluckily happened that on February the seventh the French Government fell, after the disastrous battle of the Place de la Concorde which revealed to the world the strength of Fascist influence in France; and Dollfuss was quick to read the lesson. On February eleventh his Vice-Chancellor, Major Fey, and Prince Starhemberg went out into Vienna and led the police and the Heimwehr in a systematic battue of the Social Democrats. They had very little difficulty in finding their victims as so many of them were residents in these huge blocks of flats. These they surrounded, bombarded and cleared of their inhabitants. Civil war can keep secret its casualties, and it has never been ascertained how many of these luckless tenants were killed, imprisoned or turned loose homeless and destitute; but such victims must have numbered many thousands. It was at this holocaust that my chauffeur with the blindish blue eyes had assisted, by driving Major Fey about from massacre to massacre, because he thought it was time somebody did something.

This murder marked a new phase in the genius of murder which has shaped our recent history. It was, of course, not novel in a sense. It bore the familiar thumb-print of its prime mover. Like the degradation of Croatia and Macedonia, it was utterly pointless. It could serve no possible purpose, for had Mussolini marched into Austria it would have been the armies of other countries, not the unhappy tenants of the Karl Marx Hof and the Goethe Hof, who would have resisted him. And the crime is also reminiscent of others committed by Austrians in its cold inhumanity. After the Mayerling tragedy the uncles of Marie Vetsera were summoned by night to the hunting-lodge, confronted with a laundry basket containing the naked body of their niece, were given her clothes and told to dress her, and were made to drive ten miles with her corpse propped up be-

tween them to the cemetery where she was to be furtively buried. In order to keep her on the seat it was necessary to use an umbrella as a splint for her spine and neck. None of the court officials found this service too repulsive to exact from these unhappy young men. The callousness of the funeral arrangements for the murdered Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife twenty-five years later showed that this was no passing phase of barbarity, and twenty years later these February massacres were to prove the truth of the saying, "like master, like man." The chauffeur's behaviour can be judged only if one imagines a Cockney taxi-man cheerfully spending some days driving about a ruffian who was making it his business to assault by bombardment and machine-gun the tenants of all London County Council flats, men, women and children alike. It must further be imagined that this Cockney taxi-driver would be actuated not by indignation over any definite wrong or passion for any cause, but simply by a vague hope that times might be better; and that he was not maddened by poverty, being well fed and well clothed, and able to rely on an amplitude of social services in any emergency.

But the crime was, in one sense, terrible in its novelty. The people who assassinated Prince Danilo of Montenegro and Prince Michael of Serbia were individuals holding certain ideas who wanted to kill nationalists. The man who assassinated the Empress Elizabeth was not an individual, he was a representative of the undifferentiated human mass, who killed an individual, who was the representative of the class which he held responsible for allowing that portion of humanity to lose its differentiation and sink back into the mass. The people who assassinated Alexander and Draga Obrenovitch were for the most part individuals who were nationalist and objected to individualists who should have been nationalist but had been corrupted by an alien imperialism, and for the lesser part individuals who enjoyed murder. The murder of Franz Ferdinand was as pure a case as could be imagined of a nationalist individual murdering an imperialist individual. But these February butcheries represented mass murdering mass. Mussolini was destroying people of his own sort, not for any motive that could actuate an individual with a mind, with traditions and with an interest in maintaining stable conditions, but out of some elementary reaction such as might make an embryo kick in the womb. For

the first time in the modern age the individual had been squeezed out of history. He was neither the subject nor the object of a crucial action which was to affect the destiny of many millions. This meant that henceforth events must take a violent and unreasonable course ; embryos cannot control a complicated world made by adults. It meant also that existence must decline from what ease and dignity it had attained to a hitherto unknown level of pain and humiliation : adults cannot be happily governed by embryos.

The first result of the Viennese massacres was the famous Nazi " Blood Bath " of June the thirtieth, 1934. Till now murder had played a minor part in Hitler's programme ; his mainstay was a combination of torture and imprisonment, and he had only occasionally resorted to the assassination of some specially dangerous personality. But Vienna suggested to him that perhaps, if one were sufficiently powerful, one could murder people, even a lot of people, with impunity. He acted on that suggestion by killing without trial and without warning about twelve hundred people, many of whom loved and trusted him, during the course of a single night. He thus at one and the same time fed his appetite for murder, and enacted a fantasy that all of us have played with in our infancy. Few children have not lain in their cots like little Timurlanes and prayed that in the night all the unkind and difficult world might be swept away, so that in the morning they might have a new Daddy and Mummy and Nurse, a new kindergarten. With such baby ferocity Hitler included among his victims the manager and two head waiters of the Munich restaurant which he and his party had frequented in earlier days. This too was murder of the mass by the mass : but here subject was so identical with object that this murder was no more true murder than masturbation is sexual intercourse. Many of those slaughtered were so conscious of their unchangeable identity with the Nazis that they assumed themselves to be victims of an anti-Nazi rising and died crying, " Heil, Hitler ! " However, Hitler's enjoyment of the experience, such as it was, led him to venture on the more mature form of indulgence before another month was past. On July the twenty-fifth he arranged for a Nazi uprising in Vienna, which had for its main purpose the assassination of Dollfuss. For this victim nobody need shed a tear. He had acquiesced, if indeed he had not actively collaborated, in the slaughter of

his fellow-countrymen at Mussolini's behest. But the murder was disgusting enough without the element of personal pity being involved, both in the barbarity which left Dollfuss to lie in his blood for hours, vainly asking for a priest and a doctor, and the gross cowardice which sent the conspirators scampering in every direction before they had time to realise their further plans. These, however, were bound in any case to be abortive. They could not lead to the annexation of Austria by Germany, because as must have been foreseen by any sane observer, the first rumour of the uprising brought Mussolini's troops up in force to the Brenner Pass between Italy and Austria. Whether the Blood Bath of June the thirtieth served any purpose is impossible to say, for civil war keeps its own secrets, and many of the victims were so wholly submerged in the Nazi Party that they were unknown to any human being outside it; but the murder of Dollfuss was astonishing as an example of the pointlessness characteristic of historical events determined by the dictators.

There was a little over two months' respite. All the world over nothing much is done during August, and on the Mediterranean coast this lassitude continues throughout September. But in October work began again in earnest. On the ninth of that month there was committed at Marseilles that crime which for so long preoccupied and perplexed me, the assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia. It seems to me that I have explained this crime by the material I collected on my Yugoslavian journey. He was killed because the Balkan peoples had long ago been defeated by the Turks, who like all imperialists found government nothing near so easy as conquest, so that the misgoverned Peninsula became the object of concupiscence in the neighbouring empires; and these, sitting round like wolves on their haunches in expectation of the hour when the Turks would have to hobble away and leave their booty undefended, never forgave the Balkan peoples, because in that hour, an ancient dream being strong in them, they rose and claimed their own. These wolves longed to undo that hour, recover the lost booty, and revenge themselves for their time of disappointment in the sweetness, still sweeter than theft, of butchery. Therefore they had to kill Alexander, who was the Balkan spirit incarnate, who was terrible as all Balkan peoples are, because he had twice risen from the dead, he had broken the tomb of Kossovo, and after the Austrians had stamped

down the earth over him he had kicked it away and stood upright. There can be nothing more abhorrent to murderers than a murdered man who will not stay dead, who rises stiffly up into the light, dust on his eyelashes, and in his eyes the new advantage of the wisdom he has learned among the dark foundations of our life, during his death.

He had to die. So the material I had collected proved beyond doubt. Yet as I sat at my desk and worked through the years, both my material and the events that closed in on Europe more darkly day by day suggested that perhaps Alexander died the particular death that came to him on that particular day, for no other reason than that if two embryos were partners in a game of bridge they would be apt to trump each other's aces. Mussolini and Hitler were bound to join in an alliance of negativism against the positivism of the rest of the world ; yet for a time they vied with each other in futile murder. Mussolini killed the Viennese Social Democrats in February ; Hitler killed his comrades in June and, flown with his success, got Dollfuss in July ; Mussolini, not to be outdone, brought down his man in October. The murder of Alexander was an idea that had its roots deep in history ; but perhaps it was dragged across the threshold of the world of fact simply by this spirit of competition in crime. This very pointlessness gave the crime a terrifying point. The representatives of life without mind, that is without memory or will, had killed the representative of life that had raised itself from death by letting five hundred years deposit no dust of forgetfulness, by resolving that though the heart were trans-fixed by the sword it should persist in beating.

History, it appeared, could be like the delirium of a mad-man, at once meaningless and yet charged with a dreadful meaning ; and there existed a new agent to face this character of our age and intensify it. The kind of urban population which Mussolini and Hitler represented had been drawn away from the countryside to work on the production and distribution of machinery and manufactured goods ; and this mechanical effort had given us the aeroplane. It was the dictators' perfect tool. For by raining bombs on the great cities it could gratify the desire of the mass to murder the mass ; and by that same act it would destroy the political and economic centres of ancient states with pasts that told a long continuous story, and thus make an assault on mind, tradition, and what makes the settled

hearth. Such warfare must mean ruin for all, for mass was nearly balanced by mass, and because it would be beyond the power of the world to rebuild what it had taken centuries and unclouded faith in destiny to build, save in an equal number of centuries and by an equal poetical achievement of the soul. But experience of this would not avail to stop these wars, for this was the gibbering phase of our human cycle, and defeat and extinction would be as eagerly pursued as victory. This I could deduce from the facts I was working on, and it was confirmed every day I wrote by the newspapers. These recorded the advance of a state of universal and imbecile war and worse beside. For they recorded the rehearsal of such a conflict, carried on openly and unimpeded by Germany and Italy on Spanish soil, while the powers it threatened, though still splendid with inherited strength, sat by in cataleptic quiet.

In the country it sometimes happens that the sleeper awakes to an unaccustomed stillness. It is as if silence stretched for miles above him, miles around him; and daybreak does not bring the usual sounds. He goes to his window and finds that the world is under snow. White the lawn, white the trees, white the fields beyond, black the frozen water on the path. No birds and beasts are abroad, and no labourer comes out to work. Nothing is heard but the singing of the blood in the ears, and in a pure light forms stand forth in their purity. The air, too, is cleansed by cold and is like absolution in the nostrils. Such sounds as there are, as the cry of a wild swan, such motions as there are, as the lope of a grey squirrel over the roadway, are more than they would be in a less lustrated world. That day, that week, the next week, the snowfall is an austere and invigorating delight, but if month passes month, and the snow still lies and the waters are still black, life is threatened. Such snows and ice are well on the heights which are frequented only for adventure, but ill on the lowlands where the human process is carried on. The cattle cannot drink when the springs are frozen at their sources, the sheep cannot find the hidden grass, seed cannot be sown in the adamant earth, the fruit trees cannot put forth their buds. If the snow does not melt and the waters flow, beauty becomes a steely bondage and then a doom, by which all animals must die, and man among them. We tell ourselves, when the whiteness lasts too long, that all seasons have their term and that the spring has always come in time;

and so it happened this year and last year. But it may not happen so next year. Winter has often made this visit that far outstays safety and consumes leaf and flower and fruit and loam. Snow has covered first threshold, then windows, then chimneys, of many an upland farm, enclosing at the last a silence that does not thaw in the spring sunshine. Sometimes fields and orchards that had not been thought to lie too high, have been burned by cold as by fire, and those who tended them have gone down starving to the plain. And there was once an Ice Age.

In England there was such a stillness, such a white winter of the spirit, and such a prolongation of it that death was threatened. It would have been expected, with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany crying out to kill, and England being what they both needed to kill, that there would be much bustling to and fro on the building of defences, that there would be shouts of warning, proclamations, calls to arms, debates on strategy. But there was silence, and no movement. It was as though a pall of nullity covered all the land, as if the springs of the national will were locked fast in frost. Certainly some people cried out in fear and anger against the dictators, but they were drawn from those who had detached themselves from the main body of Englishmen, some because they were better, some because they were worse. But the main body itself lay in an inertia in which, at first, there was reason for hope. For before England could attain mastery over her time she had to suffer a profound alteration from her bustling polychrome Victorian self, which was infinitely credulous regarding her own wisdom, that would assume, at a moment's notice and without the slightest reflection, the responsibility of determining the destiny of the most remote and alien people, whose material and spiritual circumstances were completely unknown to her. She needed to learn that action is not everything, that contemplation is necessary for the discovery of the way and for the refinement of the will. She needed to be still for a time and surrender herself to the mystical knowledge which cannot give instruction while logic, with its louder voice, holds the floor. It was good that she should lie under quiescence as under snow, that there should be no coming and going, that the air should be cleansed by scepticism and that only the simplest and most fundamental activities should be carried on, to reveal the essential qualities which had been forgotten in the more crowded days. There could have been



no greater misfortune for England than that the period of inactivity which was superintended by Lord Baldwin should have so perfectly resembled in outward appearances that period which would have been a necessary preliminary to her regeneration. For it might have been that a party which belonged to the past was confessing its inability to cope with the present, and was waiting to yield stoically and without fruitless struggles to the new and appropriate forces.

But the quietness lasted too long. The new forces did not emerge. The obsolete party did not mean to yield power. On the contrary, it gripped the nation's throat with a tenacity that was terrifying, because it pertained to another realm than life. For the grip of a living man must relax if he grow tired ; it is only ghostly hands that, without term, can continue to clench. But these were not honest ghosts, for had they been such they would have re-enacted the pomp of Elizabeth's power ; even if the dust lay thick on the national stage, they would have repeated the imperturbable insolence of Victoria, even if the words came hollow from the fleshless thorax. They were, however, as much strangers to all tradition of English pride as though they were alien in blood. Mussolini and Hitler threw courtesy away and yelled at our statesmen as waiters in a cheap foreign restaurant might yell at kitchen boys. Their peoples accepted from them, almost without dissent, a gospel which was in essence a call to the destruction of the British Empire and its regeneration in a baser form, and that this word was to be made flesh, and that bleeding and lacerated flesh, was proved by the tearing up of treaties and the recreation of forbidden armies. The prospect was unprecedented in its horror, because the mindless, traditionless, possessionless urban proletariat was delighted by the prospect of making air-warfare. In Germany and Italy the people as a whole licked their lips over the promise of air warfare that was held out to them by their leaders. But the governors of England hardly stirred. Their faces were bland bags. They gave no orders for our defence. Although not one sane man in the continent of Europe but knew that soon England would be bombed from the air, we built no planes.

The farmer's family, when the snow rises above the threshold and above the windows and still does not thaw, must have felt as we did. Violence is the more terrible when it comes softly,

when there is no sound but the throbbing of the alarmed blood in the ears. But our woe was worse than would be known by the victims of a natural catastrophe, for it was not nature that was handing us over to death, but people of our own blood, people of a class whom we looked on with a filial trust. We knew that they would bully us out of claiming our full adult privileges when we came of age, we knew that they would make us pay them too much of our weekly wages as a return for providing us with a home, but we trusted them to act in any last resort as our loyal parents, who would fight to the death in the defence of their young. But here came death, and they did not defend us. Rather was it that they had taken away our weapons and bound our arms to our sides and opened the door to our enemies, saying, "Yes, we have them ready for you, we have trussed them up for killing, you will have no trouble with them."

Many of us thought then that our governors were consciously betraying us because they wished to establish a totalitarian system in this country, and were eager to cooperate with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in the enslavement of Europe. Indeed thus alone could there be explained the British policy of "non-intervention" in the Spanish Civil War, which was in fact a furtive discouragement of any action, however licit, that might have aided the survival of an independent and friendly Spain, and a furtive encouragement of all actions, however illegal, that enabled our natural enemies the Germans and Italians to establish themselves on both flanks of our natural allies the French. To some small degree the allegation of treachery was valid. The coarser kinds of rogue love money, and the City therefore must inevitably hold a high proportion of them; and these were solidly pro-Nazi and pro-Fascist. Finance certainly threw some considerable influence on the side of complete surrender to Germany, on condition that the wealth of England be allowed to remain in the same hands as before. There were also certain influences in the Foreign Office which were against the defence of England. The British Minister to a certain Danubian country never ceased throughout his tenure of office to carry on fervent propaganda in favour of the Nazi plan for dismembering this country; and an attaché at a certain important Central European Legation made a point of intercepting visitors and urging on them the manifest superiority

of the German people to all others, the wrongs it had suffered from the Peace Treaty, and the necessity for showing penitence by giving the Nazis all they demanded. But these were as much exceptions to the general mood as was a desire to arm against the dictators. The governors of England have proved beyond doubt their innocence of that particular crime. If they had wished to establish Fascism they would certainly have attempted a *coup d'état* in the days of shame and bewilderment that followed Munich. But from that action, as indeed from all others, they refrained.

Now it was plain that it was not sleep which made the earth so still ; it was death. As extreme cold can burn like fire, so an unmeasured peace was stamping out life after the fashion of war. Presently war itself would come, but it would destroy only what had already been destroyed. Our houses would fall on our broken bodies ; but it was long since our hearthstones had been warm, and our bodies were as destitute of will as corpses. Under an empty sky lay an empty England. There is a pretence that this was not so, that Munich was not negative but positive, that Neville Chamberlain signed the treaty because he knew his country to be unprepared for war and therefore wanted to gain time for rearmament. If this were true it would still not acquit him of blame, since he had been a member of the Government which was responsible for the lack of arms ; but it is a lie. He and his colleagues made no use of the respite to defend their people. Here and there individuals who individually loved life worked frantically in the Army, in the Navy, in the Air Force, in the factories ; but the mass of England was still inert. Our governors stood beside us as we lay bound and helpless at their feet, smiling drunkenly without the reasonable excuse of consumed alcohol, while the strange treacherous spirit which possessed them continued to issue invitations to our enemies, saying, "Come quickly and finish them now, they can do nothing against you."

I, like all my kind, who could read and write and had travelled, was astonished. But as I looked round on this desolate historical landscape, which was desert beyond my gloomiest anticipation of where my ill fortune might bring me, it was not unfamiliar. "I have been here before," I said ; and that was true, for I had stood on the plain of Kossovo. I had walked on the battle-field where Christian rulers, faced with

those who desired to destroy their seed and their faith and their culture, resigned themselves without need to defeat, not from cowardice, not from treachery, but in obedience to some serene appetite of the soul, which felt fully sanctified in demanding its gratification. The difference between Kossovo in 1389 and England in 1939 lay in time and place and not in the events experienced, which resembled each other even in details of which we of the later catastrophe think as peculiar to our nightmare. There was in both the strange element of a gratuitous submission to a new menace of a technical sort. Even as the Nazis threatened us by their ardently prepared Air Force, so the Turks subdued the Balkan peoples by their ferocious and ingenious use of cavalry; and even as the English, though they made good guns and planes and were good artillerymen and aviators, built up no defences against attack from the air, so the Balkan peoples, though they had horses and a fine tradition of horsemanship and a long acquaintance with Turkish methods of warfare, gathered together no appropriate counter-forces. There was in both the same vertiginous spectacle of a steep gradient slanting from unchallenged supremacy down to abjection; the great Serbian Emperor Stephen Dushan, who was the most powerful monarch in the Europe of his time, died only thirty-four years before Kossovo, Munich was only thirty-seven years after the funeral of Queen Victoria.

Defeat, moreover, must mean to England the same squalor that it had meant to Serbia. Five centuries hence gentleness would be forgotten by our people; loutish men would bind ploughshares to their women's backs and walk beside them unashamed, we would grow careless of our dung, ornament and the use of foreign tongues and the discoveries made by past genius of our race would be phantoms that sometimes troubled the memory; and over the land would lie the foul jetsam left by the receding tide of a conquering race. In a Denkmal erected to a German aviator the descendant of his sergeant in the sixteenth generation, a wasted man called Hans with folds of skin instead of rolls of fat at the back of his neck, would show a coffin under a rotting swastika flag, and would praise the dead in a set, half-comprehended speech, and point at faded photographs on the peeling wall, naming the thin one Goering and the fat one Goebbels; and about the tomb of a murdered Gauleiter woman wearing lank blonde plaits, listless

with lack of possessions, would picnic among the long grasses in some last recollection of the Strength Through Joy movement, and their men would raise flimsy arms in the Hitler salute, should a tourist come by, otherwise saving the effort. In the towns homeless children, children of homeless children, themselves of like parentage, would slip into eating-houses and grovel on the dirty floor for cigarette-butts dropped by diners reared in a society for long ignorant of the nice. That is defeat, when a people's economy and culture is destroyed by an invader ; that is conquest, that is what happens when a people travels too far from the base where it has struck its roots.

It seemed that there was no help for us ; for the Government was contriving our defeat, was beyond reason and beyond pity, caught up in a painful, brooding exaltation, like the Tsar Lazar.

There flies a grey bird, a falcon,  
From Jerusalem the holy,  
And in his beak he bears a swallow.

That is no falcon, no grey bird,  
But it is the Saint Elijah,  
He carries no swallow,  
But a book from the Mother of God,  
He comes to the Tsar at Kossovo,  
He lays the book on the Tsar's knees.  
This book without like told the Tsar :  
" Tsar Lazar, of honourable stock,  
Of what kind will you have your kingdom ?  
Do you want a heavenly kingdom ?  
Do you want an earthly kingdom ?  
If you want an earthly kingdom,  
Saddle your horses, tighten your horses' girths,  
Gird on your swords,  
Then put an end to the Turkish attacks,  
And drive out every Turkish soldier.  
But if you want a heavenly kingdom  
Build you a church on Kossovo ;  
Build it not with a floor of marble  
But lay down silk and scarlet on the ground,  
Give the Eucharist and battle orders to your soldiers,  
For all your soldiers shall be destroyed,  
And you, prince, you shall be destroyed with them."

When the Tsar read the words,  
The Tsar pondered, and he pondered thus :  
" Dear God, where are these things, and how are they ?  
What kingdom shall I choose ?  
Shall I choose a heavenly kingdom ?  
Shall I choose an earthly kingdom ?  
If I choose an earthly kingdom,  
An earthly kingdom lasts only a little time,  
But a heavenly kingdom will last for eternity and its centuries."

So the Tsar chose a heavenly kingdom and the ruin of all his people.

Then the Turks overwhelmed Lazar,  
And the Tsar Lazar was destroyed,  
And his army was destroyed with him,  
Of seven and seventy thousand soldiers.

All was holy, all was honourable,  
And the goodness of God was fulfilled.

So it had been at Kossovo, and so it was in England. Quite without irony it could be said that in Mr. Neville Chamberlain's Cabinet and in Whitehall all was holy and honourable. These men were not actuated by cowardice. When they were forced by the invasion of Poland to declare war on Germany they did not flinch, though they knew better than anyone the hideous degree of our defencelessness. They were not betraying their country either for bribes or out of loyalty to Fascism. It is true that one at least of the men chiefly responsible for the lethargic conduct of the war under the Chamberlain administration was a venal character with dubious associates in Germany; but treachery is alert and quickwitted and expectant of gain, whereas the mood of our governors was drowsy and hallucinated and, as in the case of communicants, already satisfied before the time of their satisfaction, because it was mystical. When Mr. Chamberlain spoke at Birmingham after the German annexation of Czecho-Slovakia in March 1939 his voice carried over the radio a curious double counterpoint. There was one theme which expressed the anger of a vain man who finds he has been tricked, and there was another, the main theme, the profounder theme, which solemnly received the certainty of doom and salvation. " We shall fight," came the sharp and

shallow note of resentment against Hitler ; " we shall fight," sounded the cavernous secret thought, " and no doubt we shall be defeated, and the goodness of God shall be fulfilled." Again the grey falcon had flown from Jerusalem, and it was to be with the English as it was with the Christian Slavs ; the nation was to have its throat cut as if it were a black lamb in the arms of a pagan priest. We were back at the rock. We were in the power of the abominable fantasy which pretends that bloodshed is peculiarly pleasing to God, and that an act of cruelty to a helpless victim brings down favour and happiness on earth. We, like the Slavs of Kossovo, had come to a stage when that fantasy becomes a compulsion to suicide. For we had developed enough sensibility to know that to be cruel is vile, and therefore we could not wish to be the priest whose knife made the blood spurt from the black lamb's throat ; and since we still believed the blood sacrifice to be necessary we were left with no choice, if we desired a part in the service of the good, but to be the black lamb.

We had been gluttoned for centuries with wealth and power, and in the worst war the world had yet seen we had gained a glorious victory which inflicted much pain on the defeated. The sense of guilt which is born in every man, and is willing to operate without reasonable cause, had here abundant food, and for long we had been sick with masochism. This could be seen in the strange propaganda against the Treaty of Versailles which was carried on year in year out by ordinary English people, who had never read a line of it and perhaps not even known anybody that had, who had never visited the Continent, and were not receiving instructions from any political party. These people utterly ignored the work the Peace Treaties had done in liberating the smaller nations, monstrously exaggerated the hardships inflicted by their economic clauses, which, indeed, for the most part were completely inoperative, and, what was most remarkable, seemed utterly ungrateful for the clauses which aimed at making it impossible for Germany to repeat her attack on England and France. They had lost all sense that it is sometimes necessary to fight for one's life ; and many children born in the decade after the Great War can never have heard a word from their parents and teachers which suggested that their country had or could have been actuated by any motive except stupid and credulous jingoism in taking up arms in 1914. The

idea of self-preservation was as jealously hidden from the young as the facts of sex had been in earlier ages. Thus England, not a perverse Left Wing England that cared not what price it paid so long as it brought down the established order of society in ruins, but conservative, mediocre England, put itself in a position of insecurity unique in history by raising a generation of young men to whom the idea of defending their nation was repugnant not so much by reason of the danger involved (though indeed they were now often instructed in fear as in other times boys had been instructed in courage) as because they could not believe it would in any circumstances be necessary. Since every day Germany and Italy were formulating in more definite and vehement terms that they meant to vanquish and annihilate England, it was amazing that it should have been possible to enclose them in the magic sphere of this illusion. It would, of course, be comprehensible had they been drugged by sensual indulgence or grown careless of honour; but never had the mass of the people been more sober, and law-abiding and restrained, never had they been so anxious for honourable dealings between class and class and between nation and nation. The fault was not decadence but the desire for holiness, the belief in sacrifice, and a willingness to serve as the butchered victim acceptable to God.

This I could read in the pages of my own book if I spread out the newspaper beside it; and it seemed to me I must be fantasticating history, so inveterate is our modern disposition to pretend that public actions must be inspired by simple and superficial motives. We all admit that when we see a man in the street and say, "That is John Jones, he is an umbrella manufacturer, he is going to his works in Acton," we are not really describing him, we are simply putting into currency a number of facts about him which the community will find useful in their dealings with him. An adequate account of him must be as the map of a jungle, in which there range many beasts, some benign, some abhorrent. It is the special greatness of Shakespeare that he demonstrated the complexity of the individual; after *Hamlet* and *Othello* and *King Lear* it could not be pretended that man was an animal who pursues pleasure and avoids pain. But of nations that pretence is still made. It is assumed that if a nation goes to war, it must have a reasonable motive, based on material calculations, and must desire to be victorious. It is not con-



ceded that a nation should, like Hamlet, say that in its heart there was a kind of fighting that would not let it sleep, or, like Othello and King Lear, hatchet its universe to ruin.

But, as I wrote the last pages of this book, France proved, in a tragedy that ranks as supreme in history as *Hamlet* and *Othello* and *King Lear* rank in art, that a nation can be under the same necessity as an individual of tracing out a destiny which strikes it as beautiful, even if it involves self-destruction ; and the idea of this destiny, the theme of this poem which was inscribed not on paper but on life, was the theme of Kossovo, of the rock. Where England had one reason to know that Germany meant to attack her, France had ten reasons to tell her that her danger was imminent and extreme. Yet she was even more supine than England. Indeed the wheel turned full circle, and she sprang to her feet and ran about opening all gates to her enemies, crying out that they must be welcomed, since defence was impossible and unwise. Every class had its reason for wanting to submit, which was always nonsensical. Rich men alleged that they wished to collaborate with the Nazis in order to keep their wealth, though the racial theory of Hitlerism made it obvious that Nazi conquerors of France would have no interest in protecting French Nazis, simply because they were not German. Roman Catholic reactionaries longed for Hitler to come and destroy the free-thinking democrats they loathed, forgetting that the child of the *Los von Rom* movement was unlikely to treat their own faith with any special tenderness. The Front Populaire workmen in the towns shrugged their shoulders and contended that under the Nazis they would be no worse off than they were already, although all their German analogues were in concentration camps. The governing classes, though apparently active as ants, had no relation whatsoever with reality, even by means of the ideas which had engendered the parties to which they belonged. Charles Péguy once remarked that "l'intérêt, la question, l'essentiel est que dans chaque ordre, dans chaque système, la mystique ne soit point dévorée par la politique à laquelle elle a donné naissance." That catastrophe was accomplished in the perspiring and meaningless political life of Paris. All these people achieved unity in their common preparation of the altar on which they were to offer themselves as a sacrifice. For, almost without dissent from a single group, they diverted the money that should have been spent on tanks

and aeroplanes and poured it into the Maginot Line, which could not fulfil any defensive purpose since it was unfinished and could be outflanked. Lest this should not be enough, an immense army of traitors sprang up to meet the Germans as soon as they crossed the frontier and handed over fortress and bridgehead, railway and canal. Neither in them, nor in the fugitives who choked the roads and prevented the loyal French forces from resisting the invaders, was there any sense of shame. There could be no cause of shame in a nation that found itself consummating the martyrdom to which it had dedicated itself. Lest the world should miss the significance of this solemn and exultant surrender, two soldiers of the sacred French Army once led by Joan of Arc, two soldiers who had not been careless of glory in their prime, Marshal Pétain and General Weygand, announced it in voices which age paradoxically yet appropriately caused to resemble the bleating of young lambs. France, they said, was corrupt and must be regenerated by defeat. It is hard to guess what this could mean save that they were governed by the myth of Kossovo, of the rock. There was nothing Christian in such speeches. Long ago the Church had declared that its altar required nothing but "the reasonable and unbloody sacrifice" of the bread and the wine. This was the propaganda of black magic, of paganism.

Now we in England stood alone. Now, we who had been unchallenged masters of the world, were poor and beset like the South Slavs. The brightness of an exceptional summer was about us, and we believed that this would immediately be blotted out by an eternal night. But the experience was not so disagreeable as might be supposed, for we had lost our desire to die without defending ourselves, and it was that, not danger, which was horrifying. The most terrible death is subject to the same limitations as the most beautiful girl, it can only give what it has got. But voluntarily to play a part in an act of cruelty, to subscribe to a theory of the universe which supposes a God capable of showering down blessings in return for meaningless bloodshed, that is to initiate a process of degradation which is infinite, because it is imaginary and not confined within the limits of reality. From that hell we were suddenly liberated, by forces which it is hard to name. Perhaps the Germans, by the nastiness of their campaigns, acquainted us beyond all possible doubt with the squalor of this rite in which we were about to

be involved. Perhaps there is a balance in our souls which is hung truly between life and death, and rights itself if it swings over too far in the direction of death. Such an equipoise can be noted in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, which above all other works of art illuminates the sacrificial myth: he set out to prove that the case for cruelty is unanswerable, because kindness, even when it comes to its fine flower in love, is only a cloak for ravening and treachery, and at the end cries out that love is the only true jewel in the universe, that if we have not found it yet we must go on mining for it till we find it. So we go deep into the darkness and recoil to light in the supreme work of our English literature, and that was our course in the supreme crisis of our history. We offered up to death all our achievement, all that was ours down to our physical existence, and over-night we took that offer back. The instrument of our suicidal impetus, Neville Chamberlain, who had seemed as firmly entrenched in our Government as sugar in the kidneys of a diabetic patient, all at once was gone. We had sloughed our John Cantacuzenus. Now we were led by Winston Churchill, who cannot be imagined as wanting to die, though he would die if a more liberal allowance of life would be released by his death, if it were the necessary price to pay for the survival of his country. Thereafter all was easier.

Certainly it was easier. It was good to take up one's courage again, which had been laid aside so long, and feel how comfortably it fitted into the hand. But it has not been easy. How could it be anything but agony! All that time, when poor France broke and ran, we looked into the face of destiny and it was made of steel. It seemed that we might be treated like the French, like the people in the Low Countries, like the Czechs, like the Poles. And when our fear made that allusion it turned us cold, for the Czechs and the Poles need have suffered nothing if we had not been weak and mad with this strange folly of cringing to our executioners. Never to the end of our days shall we be clean of that stain. Often, when I have thought of invasion, or when a bomb has dropped near by, I have prayed, "Let me behave like a Serb," but I have known afterwards that I had no right to utter such a prayer, for the Slavs are brothers, and there is no absolution for the sins we have committed against the Slavs through our ineptitude. Thus we were without even the support of innocence when we went to

our windows and saw London burn; and those who see the city where they were born in flames find to their own astonishment that the sight touches deep sources of pain that will not listen to reason, the same that grieve so wildly when one's own kin die. We may recognise that the streets that are burned are mean and may be replaced by better, but it is of no avail to point out to a son weeping for his mother that she was old and plain.

This has seemed to me at times an unendurably horrible book to have to write, with its record of pain and violence and bloodshed, carried on for so long by such diverse peoples; and perhaps the most horrible thing about it is that, in order to carry out my intention and show the past in relation to the present it begot, I have to end it while there rages round me vileness equal to that which I describe. Now all Europe suffers as the Slavs, under enemies harder to conquer than the Turks. It might be held that there is no ground for hope anywhere save the possibility that man will over-reach himself in his assault on his own kind and so become extinct. This may happen, and may be no occasion for tears. A world where there is no solid ground, only blood and mud poached to an ooze by the perpetual tramping back and forth of Judases seducing one another in an unending cycle of treacheries, of executioners who say chop-chop and hear it said in their own ears before they have time to clean the axe: who would prefer this to a world at peace under the snow of universal death?

Yet I believe that that choice does not have to be made. If human beings were to continue to be what they are, to act as they have acted in the phases of history covered by this book, then it would be good for all of us to die. But there is hope that man may change, for two factors work on him that might dis-infect him. One is art. These days have given us a chance to test the artistic process, and judge whether it is a tool that does honest work or whether it simply makes toys for the childish. Now there is fear to distract us, now there is desolation to put up a counter-argument to any argument. We start a gramophone record, and from it there radiates the small white star of light that is, say, "Deh vieni, non tardar", the song of Susanna as she waits in the garden for the happy night to fall, at the end of *The Marriage of Figaro*. There bursts across the whole sky above, there bursts across the earth below, the huge

red star of light that is a high-explosive bomb. Surely the huge red star will consume the small white star. But it is not so. On the contrary, the huge red star withers at once. The bowels writhe to perceive it, but they immediately unknot, and the attention dismisses it, unless it is accompanied by some fantastic circumstance, a comic spatchcocking of victims against a wall, a Versaillesque ascension of the prodigious waters of a main. But the attention does not relinquish the small white star of the song, which is correct, permanent, important. "Yes," we say in our beings, heart and mind and muscles fused in listening, "this is what matters." "What matters?" echoes the astonished reason. "Can you say that a bomb which might have blown you to smithereens matters less than a song supposed to be sung by a lady's-maid, who, however, never existed, when waiting for the embraces of a valet, who, also, never existed?" "Yes," we reply. For those of us who before the war loved pictures, music and good writing, find that in these days their delights are intensified. I remember wondering, when I sat in the restaurant on the Frushka Gora and a Mozart symphony poured out through the radio, whether there was anything at all in the lovely promise that seemed to be given by the music, or whether it simply happened that the composer had imitated in a melody the tones of a human voice speaking out of tender and protective love. Now it seems to me that I can only have felt the doubt because I did not then know the ultimate insecurity which comes from a threat not merely to one's individual existence but to the life of one's people. I now find it most natural that the Dalmatians, in peril like our own, built churches and palaces, deliberations in stone on the nature of piety and pleasure, under the seaward slopes of hills that were heavy on their crests with Turkish fortresses, and desolate to landward with the ruins of annihilated Bosnia. I find it most natural that the Macedonian peasants should embroider their dresses, that they should dance and sing. For, of course, art gives us hope that history may change its spots and man become honourable. What is art? It is not decoration. It is the re-living of experience. The artist says, "I will make that event happen again, altering its shape, which was disfigured by its contacts with other events, so that its true significance is revealed;" and his audience says, "We will let that event happen again by looking at this man's picture or house, listening to his music or reading

his book." It must not be copied, it must be remembered, it must be lived again, passed through those parts of the mind which are actively engaged in life, which bleed when they are wounded and give forth the bland emulsions of joy, while at the same time it is being examined by those parts of the mind which stand apart from life. At the end of this process the roots of experience are traced; the alchemy by which they make a flower of joy or pain is, so far as is possible to our brutishness, detected. What is understood is mastered. If art could investigate all experiences then man would understand the whole of life, and could control his destiny. This is a force that could destroy the myth of the rock itself, and will, no doubt, a thousand years hence. No wonder we reach out to lay hold on such a force when we are beset with disgusting dangers.

But such deliverance will not come soon, for art is a most uncertain instrument. In writing this book I have been struck again and again by the refusal of destiny to let man see what is happening to him, its mean delight in strewing his path with red herrings. Within these pages a prime minister falls dead, crying out his belief that he has been killed by order of a king who is shortly to fall dead, crying out in his belief that he has been killed by order of that same prime minister; whereas they had both been killed by order of a body composed of two parties of men who could not guess at each other's motives, so much opposed were they in character. This might be taken as a type of any complex historical event. And if people are severed one from another by misapprehensions of fact and temperamental differences, so are they alien from reality by confusions connected with the instruments which are all they have to guide them to it. The mind is its own enemy, that fights itself with the innumerable pliant and ineluctable arms of the octopus. The myth of the rock entangles itself with the Christian legend, so that religion at once urges mankind to go on all-fours and to stand up facing the light. Art cannot talk plain sense, it must sometimes speak what sounds at first like nonsense, though it is actually supersense. But there is much nonsense about full of folly packed so tight that it has assumed the density of wisdom. The figure standing on the balcony of the little house outside Bitolj, announcing with his arms that he was about to proclaim deliverance to the plains and mountains, was a scarecrow stored from the weather till it was time to put him out among the

fruiting vines. Perhaps half the total artistic activity of man has been counterfeit. The few guides that man has been allowed to help him on his way out of the darkness come to him surrounded by traitors, dressed in their guise, indistinguishable. It is not possible to exaggerate the difficulty of man's lot. Therefore no page in history, not even the bloodiest recorded in this volume, should be condemned.

It would be small blame to any man if he had turned his back on his goal and lived like the beasts, not seeking to know. But there is a gene in him that will not be deflected. On the Montenegrin mountains the old woman walked, making the true demand of art, "Let me understand what my life means." All had failed her: first, centuries before she was born, and miles outside the orbit of her physical life, the larger group, the Eastern Roman Empire and the Slav states which were dispersed at Kossovo; then later the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Montenegrin state; and lastly, the old man sitting at her hearth. But, unpredictably, her seeking spirit did not tire. And in that word, unpredictably, rings our other cause for hope. History, like the human loins, does not breed true. Honour does not always beget honour, crime and genius spring up where no one looked for them. In this volume the most terrible part of all is played by that section of the proletariat which, since the industrial revolution, an insane social economy has sent trooping from the country into the towns, to do work that teaches them little, in conditions that make it difficult for them to attach themselves to the existing urban culture. In Italy and Germany and Austria this class fell into the extreme destitution and degradation represented by Mussolini and Hitler, and in France its inertia did much to promote the state of political banditry which led to the tragedy of 1940. In England it was controlled by a national tradition, which transcends the traditions of town and country, and by this was kept from the shame which comes of ignorance of good and evil. It seemed certain that it would prove its worth and change its circumstances by rebellion against the economic injustice which made it what it was, and in that rebellion, and probably not before, it would achieve its splendours. It and its forefathers had furnished the bulk of the individual deeds that in sum made up the heroism of our armies and navies, the fisheries and merchant fleets and mines. But the order of events never hinted that it was

reserved for them to create a new form of heroism, and perfect it in the same hour that they conceived it.

With my own eyes I witnessed that attainment. While France was falling, and after she had fallen, my husband and I went every evening to walk for an hour in the rose-garden in Regent's Park. Under the unstained heaven of that perfect summer, curiously starred with the silver elephantines of the balloon barrage, the people sat on the seats among the roses, reading the papers or looking straight in front of them, their faces white. Some of them walked among the rose-beds, with a special earnestness looking down on the bright flowers and inhaling the scent, as if to say, "That is what roses are like, that is how they smell. We must remember that, down in the darkness." There is a lake beside the rose-garden, in which there is a little island, where dwarf and alpine plants are cultivated among rocks. Across the Chinese bridge that joins it to the mainland there slowly moved a procession, as grave in their intention to see the gay fragilities between the stones as if they were going to a lying-in-state. The English, as the old woman on the Montenegrin mountains had said, love nature. Most of these people believed, and rightly, that they were presently to be subjected to a form of attack more horrible than had ever before been directed against the common man. Let nobody belittle them by pretending they were fearless. Not being as the ox and the ass, they were horribly afraid. But their pale lips did not part to say the words that would have given them security and dishonour.

What they foresaw befell them. No kind hand stretched down from the sky to reward them for their gallantry and keep them safe. Instead bombs dropped ; many were maimed and killed, and made homeless, and all knew the humiliating pain of fear. Then they began to laugh. Among the roses, when safety was theirs for a word, they had not even smiled. Now, though their knees knocked together, though their eyes were glassy with horror, they joked from sunset, when the sirens unfurled their long flag of sound, till dawn, when the light showed them the annihilation of dear and familiar things. But they were not merely stoical. They worked, they fought like soldiers, but without the least intoxication that comes of joy in killing, for they could only defend themselves, they could not in any way attack their assailants. In this sobriety, men



and women went out and dug among the ruins for the injured while bombs were still falling, and they turned on fire, which it is our nature to flee, and fought it at close range, night after night, week after week, month after month. There have been heroes on the plains of Troy, on the Elizabethan seas, on the fields of Flanders, in the Albanian mountains that go down to the sea, but none of them was more heroic than these.

It could not have been predicted that aerial warfare, the weapon of the undifferentiated mass against the undifferentiated mass, should utterly defeat its users by transforming those who suffer it to the most glorious of individuals. This sly and exalted achievement of history at one stroke regenerated the town dweller, who had fallen into a position as immoral as that of any prince by being able to vote for wars which had to be waged not by him but by professional soldiers, and lent him the innocence of the front-line soldier; it gave a promise that life can transcend itself, that we are not bound to repeat a limited pattern. This promise was fulfilled during the following year on the other side of Europe by the people whose destiny has been described in this volume. The closing months of 1940 saw the Continent sink into a state of degradation not paralleled in any other age. I could not now tell the golden-haired girl in Vienna so confidently that her ignorance of French had cost her the knowledge of a great culture and civilisation, since she could answer the longest list of names which I could give her with the single word, "Pétain". In Scandinavia, in the Low Countries and in Czecho-Slovakia men that had yesterday enjoyed freedom and dignity were dumb beasts of burden, to be hit in the mouth by German soldiers if they showed any recollection of their former state; and the continuing martyrdom of Poland was a warning against the sin of saying nay to evil. There was only one hopeful sign in the whole of Europe, and that was the resistance of Greece to the Italian invasion which began in October 1940. It was of course obvious that the Greeks need not fear the Italian forces. In the last war the Balkan forces had been very fond of a certain riddle: "What is it that has feathers but is not a bird, that runs very fast but is not a hare, that carries a gun but is not a soldier?" The answer was a bersagliere. But the Greeks knew well they would not be allowed to enjoy their inevitable victory, for the Germans could not afford to let their ally lose, and indeed would prefer to intervene in this area, lest

there should be any misunderstanding as to who was going to own it after the war. That the Greeks fought on in spite of this knowledge has been ascribed by some to their descent from Ancient Greece, but it is part of the Balkan story. The blood of the modern Greeks is strongly laced with the Slav strain, and the petticoated Evzones who dealt with the Italians were predominantly Albanians.

During the early months of 1941 it became obvious that Hitler's intervention was to be expected soon; the British had been too successful against the Italians in North Africa. He found the stage prepared for him. Roumania had long ago been seduced. King Carol, who at the beginning of the war had shown a desire to align himself with the democratic powers, had gradually given way to Axis pressure; but he had been asked to prostitute his country to a degree beyond his tolerance, and in September 1940 he abdicated and crossed the frontier. He left his throne to his young son Michael, a lad of eighteen in whom the faults of a deplorable dynasty had been exaggerated by an ill-judged education, who thereafter governed under the control of a Nazi military and civil garrison and certain Roumanian traitors. The oilfields and mines were handed over to German use on German-dictated terms, foodstuffs were put on the trains to Germany until the land groaned with hunger, the Army was put under German tutelage, ferocious punishments were inflicted by Roumanian courts on their own nationals who had dared to protest against this ruin of their people. In February 1941 the British Minister at Bucharest asked for his passports on the ground that Roumania had become a German dependency. Those who regard Fascism as a natural and healthy development of the modern state, spoiled by some flaws but on the whole an advance in the direction of law, should note the depravation that this transformation had brought with it. Roumania had always, in spite of the gifts of its people, been noted for disorder and corruption; but its past now seemed a golden age. The arrival of the German Nazis meant privilege and protection for the Roumanian Nazis, the Iron Guard, who were a set of cut-throats and racketeers, long the terror of all decent people who were trying to earn an honest living. The situation was worsened because some of the Iron Guards were less rogues than others, and these, when they saw that the Germans had come not as brothers but as alien robbers, broke into

surreptitious revolt. The country is now distracted by the worst kind of gang warfare.

Meanwhile Bulgaria was suffering a similar abasement. Whatever the Royal Family had done to preserve the country, it could do no more. All through the early months of 1941 thousands upon thousands of Germans entered the country as tourists; the Prime Minister announced in Parliament that Bulgaria could achieve its destiny only by harnessing itself to the Axis powers, and all the airfields and ports were in German hands. Here, too, the extension of German influence meant a retrogression from the native standards of civilisation. The invading Nazis worked in collaboration with the criminals who had formed I.M.R.O. after it had been corrupted by Italian money: and these gunmen and blackmailers, white-slavers and drug pedlars, whom the joint action of King Boris and King Alexander Karageorgevitch had driven back into the rat-holes where they belonged, came out again and jostled off the streets the normal Bulgarian men and women, who, till the rise of Hitler, had been living in greater serenity than their kind have known for a thousand years. By the month of March there were half a million Germans in Bulgaria, and every trace of honourable and independent national life had been suppressed.

Now the position of Yugoslavia was desperate. It was now wholly encircled by the Axis powers and their victims; for Hungary, still grumbling and mumbling "Nem nem soha," had become a vassal as pitiable as France. No aid could reach her from the Allies; Greece would not let the R.A.F. use its airfields as bases for an attack on the gathering forces in Bulgaria, on the ground, for which some pro-German influence may have been responsible, that it was at war with Italy and not with Germany. It seemed certain that Yugoslavia could refuse nothing required of it by Hitler. No country that had laid down its arms, no country that had failed to take up arms, had a better excuse for capitulation. When Hitler demanded that the Yugoslavian Government send Ministers to Vienna in order to sign a pact which would make their country subordinate to the Axis powers, it seemed that resistance was impossible.

Yugoslavia was not in an entirely happy position to meet this crisis. It had partially solved one of its major problems in 1939, by giving Home Rule to a new province of Croatia which included most of Dalmatia, Herzegovina and Slavonia. This new

Croatia had been moderately successful ; it had chosen its government from the Peasants' Party founded by Raditch and now led by Matchek, and this had pleased the peasants by agrarian reform on mildly socialist lines, but at the same time had alienated Zagreb and the bigger towns. The crisis which brought about the Croatian agreement had also led to the dismissal of Dr. Stoyadinovitch, who had become a more and more enthusiastic admirer of Hitler, and showed signs of wishing to make himself a Führer. But his path was beset by difficulties ; when he followed the customary technique of his kind and transported gangs of young men round the country so that they might attend the meetings he addressed and chant " Vodyu ! vodyu ! vodyu ! " (Leader ! leader ! leader !), the local audiences joined in with gusto ; but gradually they altered the rhythm, and by the end the halls used to ring with the chorus, " Dyavod ! dyavod ! dyavod ! " (Devil ! devil ! devil !). He belonged to that pathetic order of minor historical characters who say " Evil, be thou my good," but receive from evil only a tart toss of the head, since Mephistopheles makes it a rule to put back all Fausts under a certain size. It was unfortunate that his successor as Premier, Tsvetkovitch, was only another specimen of the same kind, another representative of the Belgrade clique of financial adventurers and place-hunters. But his was a milder case. Rather had he said " Good, be thou my evil," and prayed to be delivered from temptation. He was fortified but little by Matchek, who became Vice-Premier, and brought to the task too few and too simple ideas, and still less by his Minister of Foreign Affairs, a professional diplomat named Tsintsar-Markovitch. This man had never been accredited to London or Paris or Washington, and he had for long represented his country in Berlin. There he had learned to regard the Balkans as comically backward and the Germans as the proper rulers of the world. It is also to be noted that he was the nephew of that General Tsintsar-Markovitch who was shot on the same night as King Alexander Obrenovitch and Queen Draga. This may have induced in him a certain preference for taking the safer road.

These Ministers conducted a more or less dignified Government during the first eighteen months of the war, in close cooperation with the Regent, Prince Paul. This cooperation was the object of much suspicion throughout the country. All those who were in no position to judge, all the peasants and the

intellectuals, particularly in the provincial towns, were convinced that he was pro-Axis and was only waiting to hand over his people to Hitler ; but those who really knew him believed him to be inspired by British sympathies. Certain English diplomatic representatives in Belgrade held this opinion very strongly, and seemed to be confirmed by certain actions of the Government. When Dr. Stoyadinovitch's pro-Nazi propaganda became too blatant he was interned in a small Serbian village. But for the most part the Government trod the familiar path of appeasement, with the familiar results. It fell into economic serfdom. It sent its agricultural produce to Germany in the quantities demanded, even when the 1940 harvest failed and there was not enough for the home market. By January 1941 bread prices had risen by 157 per cent over the 1939 standard. In return Germany sent Yugoslavia such manufactured goods of which she happened to have a surplus, irrespective of whether they were welcome or not, and it altered the rate of exchange in its favour. But there were signs that not only in the economic sphere was German influence paramount. The Minister of War, General Neditch, looked over his shoulder at Roumania and came to the conclusion that if Yugoslavia were not to suffer the same fate it had better go to the assistance of Greece and drive the Italians out of Albania before Hitler could send his armies into the Peninsula. He was at once dismissed and replaced by a pro-Axis general. As time went on, and the situation developed according to General Neditch's apprehension, the Government refused to take any precautionary steps. They would not, even secretly, hold any conversations with the British or Greeks.

It could not be doubted, therefore, that the Yugoslav Government would accept Hitler's invitation to Vienna, and there would jump through any hoop held up to them. Immediately before, it is true, it had made a gesture of independence by deporting Dr. Stoyadinovitch and putting him in the hands of the British authorities in Greece ; but this was an astute move which at once removed him from the possibility of injury at the hands of anti-Nazi Yugoslavs, and placated them. On March the twenty-fifth Tsvetkovitch and Tsintsar-Markovitch toed the line and took the train for Vienna. There Ribbentrop received them in the Belvedere, the superb baroque palace which was built for Prince Eugène of Savoy and was the home of Franz

Ferdinand and Sophie Chotek, which looks over the lawns and fountains of its terraced gardens to the spires and domes of the city which has added so much beauty to art and so much infamy to life. In these high rooms, which are full of a cold secondary brightness reflected from ancient gilded mirrors and immemorably polished floors, the Yugoslav Ministers were asked to sign the familiar Tri-partite Pact by which every country devoured by the Axis binds itself not to lift a finger against its devourer. They were also asked to pledge themselves not to permit in their territories any activity directed against the Axis, and to bring their national economy into harmony with the New Economic Order of the Reich. This would mean, as it had meant to all the other subjugated countries, enslavement of the national mind, starvation of the national body. There was also imposed on Yugoslavia an ignominy peculiar to the moment. The pact bound it to permit the passage of German war-material on the railways to Greece ; and it was not to retain the right of inspection of such traffic. This meant that troops also would probably be carried. Thus Yugoslavia was forced to help Germany to knife in the back a Balkan brother, her kin by blood and tradition.

In order that the Ministers might be able to put up some sort of defence when they went home, the Germans inserted clauses which guaranteed the existing frontiers of Yugoslavia and promised it an outlet on the Aegean Sea. But this was a grimace, which popped the tongue out of the leering mouth, for Germany had already promised the Bulgarians substantial slices of Yugoslavia, and some of these actually barred the way to the Aegean Sea. The same spirit which had invented these clauses must have smiled to see that when Tsvetkovitch and Tsintsar-Markovitch signed this degrading pact they were watched by Count Ciano and the Japanese Ambassador. The presence of Count Ciano committed several offences against delicacy. The blood of King Alexander and of many Yugoslav peasants and policemen was on his hands ; at a moment when his people had made themselves the laughing-stock of the world by their poor performance in the battlefield, it was not fitting that he should gloat over the abasement of a people who had never failed in courage and had been defeated only by the defection of other and stronger powers ; and he was grinning at shame and ruin inflicted by one who was preparing to shame and

ruin his own Italian compatriots. The presence of the Japanese Ambassador violated a more fundamental standard. Although the Germans have pondered so long on the problems of race, they had not realised that it is never right for a white man to behold the humiliation of a black or yellow man, never right for a black or yellow man to behold the humiliation of a white man. When Hitler received Tsvetkovitch and Tsintsar-Markovitch after the ceremony he presided over such a situation as is dear to his heart. No concession to human dignity had been made. As the Ministers went back to Belgrade that night they must have had one consolation, and one consolation only. Henceforth their people might live in slavery, but they would live. No Yugoslav need die before the term of his natural life.

But Yugoslavs did not want the life thus bought for them. With their subtlety they saw it for what it was, with their simplicity they spat on the hands which offered it. For many days, ever since it was first whispered that Yugoslavia was to be asked to submit to the yoke of Germany, the whole country had been declaring that it would prefer resistance and death. There was no class that did not make its protest. Although the Army had been peppered with pro-Axis generals, the officers grimly demanded that they should be allowed to fight alongside the Greeks. The intellectuals who did not use the same spectacles as the Army now saw eye to eye with them. Four Cabinet Ministers resigned, and Tsvetkovitch found it hard to replace them. Many Civil servants resigned their posts, from the Governors of Croatia and the Vardar province, down to humble folk who when they left their offices walked out into starvation. The priests and monks of the Orthodox Church preached to their congregations that they must not let the Government sign them away to an alien domination which cared nothing for good and evil, and would not allow the Slav soul its own method of doing the will of God ; and the Patriarch Gavrilo went to Prince Paul and bade him not misuse the power of the Regency to destroy the state which had been left in his care. But fiercest of all were the peasants. Everywhere they crowded into the towns and villages to cry out against the shame that the Government was forcing on them.

When it became known that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs had been to Vienna and had signed the pact, the passion of the people blazed up into a steady flame.

Now the police would no longer use their weapons against the demonstrators or arrest them, and the Army was so disaffected that all troops, including officers, had been confined to barracks. The whole country demanded that the pact must not be ratified, and that arms must be taken up against the Germans. It must be realised that this demand was not made by people who were ignorant of what modern warfare means. Many of those who were most insistent in their call for action were middle-aged and elderly people who had known in the last war what it was to be wounded and hungry and homeless. Moreover they had all followed the news and were well aware of what aerial bombardment had done to London and Rotterdam and Berlin ; and some of them remembered the first use of airplanes in warfare, when the Serbian fugitives were bombed as they fled across Kossovo. It must also be realised that these people knew quite well that if they made war against Germany they would certainly be defeated. There were a few Communist boys and girls who, not realising that Stalin was still as devoted a practitioner of the policy of appeasement as Neville Chamberlain, believed that if they stood up against Hitler Russia would put out its strong arm and protect them. But for the rest no Yugoslav was under the delusion that his small and ill-equipped and encircled Army had any chance of victory against the immense mechanised forces of Germany. He was also well aware of the kind of vengeance that Hitler would take on a people who combined the offences of being Slav and having resisted him. He knew very well that he must soon be in the hands of the same sort of jailers that had taken care of Princip and Chabrinovitch.

To Prince Paul, who was essentially though accidentally not a Serb, the aspirations of his people must have seemed inconveniently extraordinary and extraordinarily inconvenient. He dealt with the situation in his own way. He welcomed the returning Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs at a suburban station of Belgrade, telegraphed a message of thanks to Hitler, sending him "good wishes for the further prosperity of the great German people," and later took train for Slovenia, where he had a villa near Bled. Some thought he meant to decamp over the frontier into Austria, but this is improbable, for he left his wife and children in Belgrade. Merely he wanted to rest, to pretend that nothing was happening. While he was travelling through this country, in which he had never struck



root, though he had no other, in which, with his facile but uncreative artistic temperament, he had been a kind of gipsy, Belgrade woke again from the sleep in which she had spent the last few years and was possessed by the genius of her history, harsh, potent, realist, daemonic, furtive and nocturnal. Late on the night of March the twenty-sixth, the wife of General Dushan Simovitch, Chief of the Air Force, was puzzled because he was so wide-awake. He expressed the opinion that perhaps he had drunk too much coffee. At half-past two in the morning he was still awake, and showed no surprise when there was a knock at his front door. "What does all this mean?" she asked. "Only," said the General, "that there has broken out a revolution, and I am the leader of it." She answered, in a wifely spirit, "Nonsense, it's no use telling me that you are the leader of a revolution!"

Her incredulity was not unnatural. General Simovitch, who was fifty-eight years old, had never been a fire-eater. He had not been one of the regicides, and he had not belonged to the Black Hand. In appearance he is like many Yugoslav officers: he is tall and spare, but his thick neck would take a deal of breaking; he has a pouched, deliberate, humorous eye and a weatherbeaten skin. He was admitted to be a brilliant soldier and was an acknowledged authority on tactics; but he had five times been dismissed from important posts for reasons that were both creditable and, under his handling, amusing. The first of these famous disputes concerned two students of a Military College whom he ploughed in an examination although they were relatives of an influential politician; the later ones concerned more serious matters. In such controversies he showed to advantage, for he was possessed of a subtle wit that could express itself in simple terms, and with apparent artlessness, in the half-smiling grumble of the old soldier, could pin down a character or a situation with a phrase that the most lapidary author could only envy. This felicity was supported not only by considerable intellectual gifts but by the kind of sturdy character that comes of an honourable family and national tradition. He was descended from a Herzegovinian who had fled to Serbia at the time of the revolt against the Pashas, and had become a true man of the Shumadiya, fighting for national independence under Karageorge and Milosh Obrenovitch and begetting sons that took his place in later wars. What General

Simovitch liked best in the world was his little country property outside Belgrade, but he was not averse from power.

Because of this man's instructions stealthy figures, murmuring passwords, had slipped through the shadows of the city all night long, effecting certain changes. But this was not as other nights that Belgrade had known, for there was but little bloodshed, and that through accident. Picked Air Force troops, joined by three out of the four battalions of the Royal Guards, and by other Army units and many of the police, seized the important Government buildings. Most of them were surrendered without a blow by guardians who had received warning, but it unfortunately happened that the message sent to the police in charge of the radio had gone astray, and they attacked the party who came to take it over from them in the belief that they were Germans in disguise. Nowhere else was there any loss of life. Tsvetkovitch and Tsintsar-Markovitch were awakened out of their sleep, which was probably not very deep, and were courteously put under arrest. A message was handed into Prince Paul's sleeping coupé to ask him to return. He reluctantly broke his journey at Zagreb, and after a visit to the Governor of Croatia, took a train back to Belgrade. Meanwhile General Simovitch had been to Dedinye to tell the young King that he must assume power at once instead of waiting for his eighteenth birthday in September. There he was setting foot on the most dangerous ground in the area of the revolution. But he gave orders to the Royal Guards who surrounded the Palace not to fire on the Royal Guards inside the Palace, who had, owing to certain timid or alien influences, not joined in the *coup d'état*; and as the King had given these men orders not to fire on the troops outside, the entry took place without incident.

The boy in the Palace had spent a day of solitary but intense excitement. On the previous evening the court officials, who had been dropping certain hints for some time past, had made the quite definite statement that his people had turned against him and that unless he locked himself in the Palace he would be assassinated. On the whole the boy was convinced by this story. He had been taken from school to attend the funeral of his murdered father when he was only twelve years old, and he knew the history of his country, so it seemed to him not improbable. He took two pistols out of a cupboard where he had hidden them and carried them about with him all day, in order

that he might not have to meet his fate in a passive way. From his father he had inherited a stiff and reticent kind of physical courage, and that was not the only characteristic he owed to his family and his Serb blood. Like a creature of the wild, he was leery of traps. He did not commit himself entirely to his court. He had been educated, according to the democratic tradition of the Karageorgevitches, in the company of half a dozen boys of representative Serbian parentage, with whom he had to learn his lessons and play games on equal terms ; and these boys were accustomed to ring him up at Dedinye on a private line. Some time before the King had contrived to get the Telephone Company to put in a new private line without the knowledge of his *entourage*, and he had entrusted the number to one of these friends, a boy named Kostitch. All the morning of March the twenty-sixth the King sat in his room not daring to make a call, but waiting to snatch at any incoming message. At noon Kostitch rang him up, and the King asked him if it were true that his people wanted to kill him. His friend answered that nothing could be less true, that it was Prince Paul and the Government that were hated, and that soon a revolutionary force would come to the Palace and set him free to rule over them in the moment of their rising against Germany. After this whispered announcement that he was to be asked to lead his country into disaster and could only look forward to death or imprisonment or exile, the young King was at ease. But the news that the people outside his Palace were his friends meant that those around him were his enemies, and he continued to carry his pistols. They were under his pillow when he was awakened to see General Simovitch.

At eight o'clock in the morning the exhilarated boy drove in radiant sunshine through Belgrade, which rejoiced as if he were returning from victory instead of being about to lead them to defeat. From the city Palace he issued a Proclamation declaring that he was about to assume royal power, that the Army and the Navy had put themselves at his disposal, and appealing to the Croats and Slovenes and Serbs to stand firm round the throne. The crowd that gathered in the street to see him show himself on the balcony, gave rapturous cheers and crossed the town to the Palace of the Patriarch, and the Patriarch Gavrilo came out and offered up thanks that the dynasty had put forth a king to protect the honour of the Serbian people when it

seemed about to perish. Perhaps his tongue slipped, but he spoke the truth : this was indeed a drama played by the Serbian rather than by the Yugoslav people. The *coup d'état* was planned and executed by men of the Shumadiya, of the same stock as Karagorge and Milosh Obrenovitch. But during the day a Cabinet was formed which included representatives of all the three peoples, and all shades of opinion among them. This added to the joy of the people, when evening came and the lists of the new Ministers were posted on the walls, for they had regarded national unity as a poet might regard a poem he had never been able to finish. "Whatever happens after this," an old man said, "nothing better could have happened, at last we are all together." The only conspicuous figure who did not act according to the grand style of the occasion was Dr. Matchek. He had not felt any great revulsion against the signing of the pact with the Axis, though Hitler had cruelly mistreated some of the Croats he had found in Vienna, and he had not been one of the Ministers who had resigned in protest ; and when it appeared that General Simovitch's Government contained some Serbs who had opposed Croat autonomy, Dr. Matchek felt doubtful about the possibility of collaborating with them, although that problem had been virtually settled two years before and was not likely to be reopened. Ultimately he abandoned this attitude and became once more Vice-Premier, but not till several days later. History has made lawyers of the Croats, soldiers and poets of the Serbs. It is an unhappy divergence.

During the day public opinion hardened against Prince Paul. State papers were studied, officials interrogated, suspicions followed to their sources. It turned out that the peasants and provincial intellectuals, who had no means whatsoever of knowing what was going on in Prince Paul's head, had been right about his attitude ; and the experts who had intimate knowledge of him were wrong. He had for some time been pro-Axis. His lack of resistance to Nazi claims was not only due to the feeling, which any scrupulous person in his position must have shared, that a regent had not the same right as a reigning monarch to pledge his country to an expensive policy ; nor was it due to the lack of respect he had naturally enough felt for Chamberlain's England and distrust of it as an ally. It was the result of a genuine admiration for Hitler's personality and a desire that Yugoslavia should throw in its lot with the winning

side. So strongly had he held this view that he was actually responsible for the pro-Axis actions of those whom observers had believed to be far more Nazi than himself. Tsvetkovitch himself, cynical professional politician though he was, had not been the cynic of this crisis. He had presented to Prince Paul an admirable memorandum on the invitation to Vienna, which pointed out that no matter how Yugoslavia might act it was faced with material doom. If it resisted the German demands, the country would be overrun by German soldiers and officials, and its fields and mines and forests would be raided, and national life would be at an end; and if it yielded to the German demands, precisely the same would happen. There was little difference in hunger and oppression between Holland and Roumania, Belgium and Bulgaria. There was, of course, the very great difference that in the case of resistance innumerable Yugoslavs would meet death or injury under aerial bombardment and in warfare with invading troops. But this was not the ultimate consideration. For some day the rule of Hitler must pass; it could not endure for ever. Then, if Yugoslavia had moved against him with pride and courage, those that conquered him would have to admit it as comrade and grant it full right to exist in whatever New Order of Europe might be instituted. But if Yugoslavs behaved like cowards, no one would respect them, not even themselves, and they would remain abased for ever. Therefore he desired Prince Paul to give the Government permission to refuse Germany's demands. This is a characteristically Serbian point of view, and is based on their experience of Turkish conquest and their emergence from it. But Prince Paul was not sympathetic and persuaded Tsvetkovitch to act against his judgment and make the journey of humiliation to Vienna. Because such hidden dramas as these were now made plain, there grew in Belgrade during the day the fear that, since Prince Paul had not been so passive as people had supposed, he might be much more active, and that he might call on certain corrupted elements in the country and declare a state of civil war in Germany's interest. Many people, particularly in the Army, believed that for the sake of security he ought to be shot.

At seven o'clock in the evening General Simovitch went to the station to meet the train that was bringing Prince Paul back from Zagreb. He had given orders that another train was to be ready to proceed to the Greek frontier. When Prince Paul

arrived the General drove with him to the War Office, one of the largest buildings in the administrative quarter on the east side of the city, so often denounced by travellers for its tastelessness and mediocrity. When they went into the hall of the War Office the General said, "We must take the lift up to the first floor," but before they could get into the lift an officer stepped forward and told Prince Paul, "No, you must go by the staircase." The words must have sounded like a knell in his ear, so terrible have these spare and dedicated men become in those hours when the subjects of their dedication have seemed to them to have forgotten the terms of their common hieratic faith. With a self-conscious smile Prince Paul murmured, "Your chief tells me to go by the lift, and you tell me to go by the staircase. Which of you am I to obey?" "It is better that you should go by the staircase," said the officer, and General Simovitch told the Prince that perhaps they had better go that way. His kind of Serb knows his people's temper as a peasant knows the weather. But it was not, as Prince Paul must have feared, violence that was awaiting him. The staircase was broad and high; and on every step stood two officers, one on each side, who said, as the Prince Paul passed between them, "Long live the King!" These lines of men, holy and fierce like angry angels in their hatred of the ruler who had conspired against their death and salvation, transformed this commonplace feature of a building quite undistinguishable from a thousand others in the minor capital cities of the world; and now it resembled such emblematic architecture as fills the distances of those Serbo-Byzantine frescoes, which convert the false rounded shapes seen in our weak corporeal eyes into the angular likeness of reality. The presence of Prince Paul on this scene was a profound incongruity, for though he was a lover of painting he had never appreciated these frescoes. To make a complex subject easier for the connoisseur and the art dealer, Byzantine art has been very elaborately graded, largely by experts who have never seen most of the surviving specimens; and the Serbian school, along with others which are difficult of access, has been marked low. It was a consideration which, for all his sincere aesthetic feeling, would have affected him. In the small room to which he was taken at the top of the stairs he made no difficulty about signing the deed of abdication which was presented to him; and when General Simovitch said, "And now I await your orders," he

asked only to be allowed to leave the country. The next day the train which had been made ready took him and his family to Greece. He stayed for a short time in Athens, and later went to Kenya.

Once that faint alien personality had gone, the scene closed up behind him and became wholly Serbian, wholly a fresco of the Nemanyan age. At Dedinye the Patriarch administered the oath of accession to the young King in the presence of the new Cabinet, and afterwards they attended a thanksgiving Mass at the Cathedral. Peter Karageorgevitch the Second stood rigid in his kingliness, as the earlier dynasty in their jewelled tunics and colossal diadem ; the soldiers stood firm about him, content because his majesty made visible before their eyes the state, the life of their people ; the priests and monks of the Orthodox Church, like those who had worn the white cloaks marked with black crosses in old time, completed the scene with their assertion that salvation and damnation are real things, and inflict the extreme of bliss and the extreme of woe ; and the women who beheld them grieved like the Mother of God on the walls of Dechani and Grachanitsa amazed at the bitter taste of tragedy, but not spitting it out because it was the sacramental food which goodness was dispensing in that hour. For a time the scene was still as a fresco. Germany asked the new Government for a ratification of the pact signed at the Belvedere Palace, and received a refusal, combined with the assurance that Yugoslavia was willing to be neutral and favour none of the belligerent powers. This reply was followed by a stunned pause. Then a familiar sound was heard from the German broadcasting stations. They broke into squawking complaints that in the streets of Yugoslavian towns inoffensive Germans had been set upon and beaten, and German shops had been looted, and that in the German settlements in Slovenia and by the Danube villages had been wiped out and farms burned. These announcements were given out in the tones of a hysterical woman accusing a man she had never seen of having raped her, whooping and lickerish and lying. The Consul-General of Lyublyana performed what was probably the most heroic act ascribed to any German since the Nazi domination. Knowing himself henceforward the victim of an ineluctable vengeance, he issued a statement branding all allegations of the mishandling of German minorities in Slovenia as totally untrue, and thanking



TSETINYE





PETER KARAGEORGEVITCH, KING OF YUGOSLAVIA, TAKES THE OATH OF ACCESSION, 28TH MARCH 1941 AT THE PALACE, DEDINYE

Left to right: Mr. Grol, Minister of Education; Patriarch Garvilo; Dr. Ninthitch, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Bogolyub Yevtitch, Minister of Communications; Professor Slobodan Yovanovitch, Vice-Premier; King Peter; Prime Minister Simovitch

the Yugoslav Government and people for the kindness and loyalty they had shown to their "Schwabs" when they might well have turned against them. But the matter of veracity was, of course, beside the point. The radio campaign was simply a warning to Europe that yet another innocent people was about to perish.

Why did the Yugoslavs choose to perish? It must be reiterated that it was their choice, made out of full knowledge. On none of them did their fate steal unawares. Their leader, General Simovitch, knew that he could lead his army only to defeat which could not long be delayed. When he had been Chief of Staff some years before he had worked out a scheme of national defence, perfectly adapted to this crisis, which provided against attack from any quarter by concentrating the reserve armies in the central districts and building radial roads as lines of communication. But his successor pigeon-holed this scheme and by a disposition of his own had drawn a cordon of troops all round the country, with a terrible gap on the Bulgarian frontier, from which, he had too optimistically conceived, no attack was now likely to come. In existing conditions this disposition meant that the German mechanised forces would pour into the country from every direction, would simultaneously pierce the front at a number of places, and would be able to cut off and surround the several defending armies. The situation was perfectly understood by all military ranks, and the vast crowds who thronged the churches and took communion showed that the civilian population were not behind them in understanding. This determination to resist oppression and bleed for it rather than submit and be safe cannot be explained, any more than the resolution of the English town dweller, by fearlessness. These people, being artists, knew death for what it is. The young soldiers who talked with Dragutin on the slopes of Kaimakshalan knew that the ghosts around them whimpered, "Yao, matke!", "Alas, Mother!", and could not overpass the bitterness that had befallen them on the battlefield. My friend Militsa has a most delicate mind, most delicate flesh, and both would flinch before the spreading chill of the grave. Nor were they governed by the myth of the rock, they did not desire defeat as a coin to buy salvation off an idiot god, they did not offer themselves up as black lambs to an unsacred priest. The appetite for death that comes on all human beings when they have enjoyed the fulness

of life, because we as yet know only the swing of the pendulum and not the motion of growth, had in the Yugoslavs been glutted by Kossovo and the Turkish conquest. This was a state and a people that, above all others, wanted to live.

Yet in this hour the Yugoslavs often repeated the poem of the Tsar Lazar and the grey falcon, which above all other works of art celebrated this appetite for sacrificial self-immolation. "All was holy, all was honourable," they quoted, looking down from the tall tower of prescience on the field of their coming fate, "and the goodness of God was fulfilled." It was factually inappropriate. In the Yugoslavia of 1941 there was no one who would have bought his personal salvation by consenting to the subjugation of his people, and no one who would not have preferred to be victorious over the Nazis if that had been possible. It was their resistance, not their defeat, which appeared to them as the sacred element in their ordeal. Yet the poem sounded in their ears as a prophecy fulfilled in their action, a blessing given across the ages by omniscience perfectly aware of what it was blessing behind the curve of time, and indeed none who loved them could read it now without a piercing sense of appositeness. It applies ; and the secret of its application lies in the complex nature of all profound works of art. An artist is goaded into creation on this level by his need to resolve some important conflict, to find out where the truth lies among divergent opinions on a vital issue. His work, therefore, is often a palimpsest on which are superimposed several incompatible views about his subject ; and it may be that which is expressed with the greatest intensity, which his deeper nature finds the truest, is not that which has determined the narrative form he has given to it. The poem of the Tsar Lazar and the grey falcon tells a story which celebrates the death-wish ; but its hidden meaning pulses with life.

An earthly kingdom lasts only a little time,  
But a heavenly kingdom will last for eternity and its centuries.

Goodness is adorable, and it is immortal. When it is trodden down into the earth it springs up again, and human beings scabble in the dust to find the first green seedling of its return. The stock cannot survive save by the mutual kindness of man and woman, of old and young, of state and individual. Hatred comes before love, and gives the hater strange and delicious

pleasures, but its works are short-lived ; the head is cut from the body before the time of natural death, the lie is told to frustrate the other rogue's plan before it comes to fruit. Sooner or later society tires of making a mosaic of these evil fragments ; and even if the rule of hatred lasts some centuries it occupies no place in real time, it is a hiatus in reality, and not the vastest material thefts, not world-wide raids on mines and granaries, can give it substance. The Yugoslavs, who have often been constrained to sin by history, are nevertheless well aware of the difference between good and evil. They knew that a state which recognises the obligation of justice and mercy, that is to say a state which forbids its citizens to indulge in the grosser forms of hatred and gives them the opportunity to live according to love, has more chance to survive in the world than a state based on the scurrying processes of murder and rapine ; and they knew too that if a state based on love bows to the will of a state based on hatred without making the uttermost resistance, it passes into the category of the other in the real world. Therefore they chose that Yugoslavia should be destroyed rather than submit to Germany and be secure, and made that choice for love of life, and not love of death.

At dawn on April the sixth German planes raided Belgrade and continued the attack for four days. Germany had not made a declaration of war, and Belgrade had been proclaimed an open town. Eight hundred planes flew low over the city and methodically destroyed the Palace, the university, the hospitals, the churches, the schools, and most of the dwelling-houses. Twenty-four thousand corpses were taken away to the cemeteries, and many others lie buried under the ruins. On April the seventh the German Foreign Office announced that their troops had penetrated twenty miles over the frontier. Thereafter all happened as had been foretold. Invading troops encircled the country. From everywhere came the Germans and the Austrians, their age-old hatred of the Slav now perfectly equipped with the mechanical means of expression. The Italians shamelessly appeared in Dalmatia and Croatia, where by themselves they had never dared to go. In Budapest, four months after Hungary had signed a pact of eternal friendship with Yugoslavia, Count Teleki committed suicide from shame because his Cabinet was ready to give Germany permission to send its troops over Hungarian railways and use Hungarian airports ;

and now these procurers sent their own troops over the border towards the Danube. The eastern frontier was crossed by the German mechanised forces which Bulgaria had long been nourishing, who brought with them not only the Bulgarian Army but the worst of I.M.R.O. These invaders cut off and cut to pieces the defending forces. On April the eighteenth the German Government made an announcement that the Yugoslav Army had capitulated, but this was not true. It was given out only in order that the Germans should have an excuse to shoot all surrendering Yugoslavs instead of taking them prisoner. The Yugoslav Army never capitulated, although it was destroyed ; and the last remnants of it are still fighting, hidden in the mountains and forests.

Thereafter it was as if drops of black, foul-smelling oil were rolling down the map of Yugoslavia. The Italians were given control of Dalmatia, and as they desire comfortable possession of the Adriatic ports they have ruled without excessive inhumanity save to certain individuals. But in Croatia they are doing what the Germans have done in Roumania and Bulgaria ; they have depraved the native standard of order by putting the criminal classes in power over the ordinary decent men and women. The post of Prime Minister, that is to say absolute ruler under Nazi control, has been given to Ante Pavelitch, the organiser of Croat terrorism who had conducted the training camps for assassins in Italy and Hungary, who was responsible for the deaths of countless people in bomb explosions and train wrecks, who personally accompanied the murderers of King Alexander of Yugoslavia to France, supplying them with weapons and giving them instructions, and for this was condemned to death in his absence by the French courts. This sordid specimen of the professional revolutionist is now ruling over the gentle intellectuals of Zagreb, the worshippers at Shestinye, the doctors in the sanatorium. In Bosnia, Sarajevo and other towns have been laid waste from the air ; and there all members of the Orthodox Church, all Jews, and all gipsies wear on their arms a common badge of disgrace, and may not travel in public vehicles. Conditions here are bad, but they are worse in Serbia, which Hitler rightly recognises as the well-spring of South Slav resistance. There large numbers of men and boys over ten have been sent to concentration camps in Roumania and elsewhere, and there is in practice a policy of extermination such as has

been directed against the Poles. In Macedonia all Serbs who have settled there during the last twenty-five years have been forced to abandon their property and return penniless to wander in the devastated area in the north. Large districts have been handed over to occupation by I.M.R.O. under its most merciless leader, Ivan Mihailov, and there has been such pillage and massacre that numbers of peasants have fled to the mountains. Many priests and monks have been killed. The mixed population of such towns as Skoplje has irritated the racial purism of the Germans ; a number of Turkish Moslems have been executed. This land was already the nonpareil of suffering, but it is now transcending its own experience.

A part of the Yugoslav Army retreated through the mountain passes into Greece, and there fought a rearguard action beside the British, and of these some soldiers made their way across the Mediterranean to Egypt ; some sailors and fishermen escaped by sea ; and some civilians reached Turkey, and others, incredibly enough, emerged at Lisbon. The Government sent King Peter out of Belgrade at the beginning of the air raids, to stay at the monastery of Ostrog, a bleak pigeon-hole in a Montenegrin cliff. They chose this place because it is only a few miles from Nikshitch, which possesses an airfield. When it was seen that defeat was coming very soon, the royal party was told to go to the airfield and wait for a plane to pick them up and take them to Yanina in Greece, which was still in British hands. They sat for some time in Nikshitch, which is a pleasant little stone town set among mulberry trees on a fertile plateau encircled by bare mountains ; but the plane did not come, and it was found impossible to communicate with any other Yugoslavian airfield. The Germans had now seized them all. There was nothing to do but take one of the planes which was already on the airfield ; and these were all Italian Marchettis. If they took one of these, they would inevitably be attacked by any British plane or anti-aircraft battery which saw them approaching ; and it would be impossible to send a message to Yanina by radio lest it should be intercepted by the Germans. They sent a plane ahead of them, but had to start without knowing whether it had got through. The journey was made safely, but only owing to a singular piece of good fortune. As the plane came to Yanina, a swarm of fighters rose up around it, and the pilot, in an effort to convey that this was not an enemy craft,

dropped some signals at random. It happened that the British authorities had sent them a message, which they had not received, telling them to declare their identity by dropping almost exactly the combination of signals which the pilot had picked by chance.

From Yanina the King flew to Jerusalem, whence the falcon had flown to Kossovo with the message from the Mother of God. There he was joined by General Simovitch and some of his Ministers, who also had flown from Nikshitch. Two others were shot down during their flight; and some, including Matchek, were trapped in their homes and are in prison. Later the King and his Ministers flew out of Asia across Africa to Lisbon, and then to London, where they now await peace and the reconstitution of their state. They have come to the West not as unfortunate petitioners but as benefactors; for the resistance they had made against Germany had given Great Britain a valuable respite. The Germans, it is now known, had meant to use their forces in Bulgaria not against Yugoslavia but against Turkey, as a preliminary step to an attack on Russia. This step should have been taken in March, to coincide with the *coup d'état* of Raschid Ali in Irak and the German penetration of Syria, and Russia should have been attacked in May by an enemy which already held the subjugated Near East. But the unexpected resistance of Yugoslavia diverted the German forces in Bulgaria from east to west, and prolonged the German advance through Greece until the *coup d'état* in Irak had been suppressed and the English preparations for the invasion of Syria were well under way. Thus the attack on Russia was postponed for a month, and then had to be a frontal attack, delivered without the advantages Germany would have derived from the subjugation of the Near East. The South Slavs had achieved another stage in their paradoxical destiny. They who were among the last to accept Christianity are the last to preserve it in the morning strength of its magic. They who were among the last to achieve order and gentleness are the last legates of the Byzantine Empire in its law and magnificence. In this war, as in the one before it, they have made out of their defeats great victories, which have preserved the powerful empires that were their allies from the shame of becoming weak like themselves. Now, in this hour when their king is in exile and their hearths are defiled by swine, their state seems as a rock in a shifting world; and all over Europe the sorrowful find comfort in thinking on their

history, though it passes from woe to woe. For the news that Hitler had been defied by Yugoslavia travelled like sunshine over the countries which he had devoured and humiliated, promising spring. In Marseilles some people picked flowers from their gardens and others ordered wreaths from the florists, and they carried them down to the Cannebière. The police guessed what they meant to do, and would not let them go along the street. But there were trams passing by, and they boarded them. The tram-drivers drove very slowly, and the people were able to throw down their flowers on the spot where King Alexander of Yugoslavia had been killed.



them without comment so adverse as to be libellous. Under this head falls the work of a writer universally recognised as an authority on the Balkans. I trust that the publication of this book still leaves me in a position to say that a major inaccuracy on every page seems to me too many; and besides inaccuracies that spring from a desire to exalt one Balkan race above another this author commits many which are due simply to disregard for fact. It is hard to forgive a writer who includes in the same volume a panegyric on a certain eighteenth-century Balkan ruler and a polemic against him, written under the delusion that he was two different persons. There are several other authors whom I have rejected on similar counts.

Other writers I have rejected, who, though not so inaccurate by nature, repeat inaccuracies which have been invented by others for political motives. There is, for example, a persistent legend that the Sarajevo *attentat* was planned and executed with the connivance of the Russian General Staff, through the instrumentality of "Apis" and the Russian Military Attaché in Belgrade, General Artamanoff. This Russian complicity is alleged in Herr In der Maur's *Die Jugoslavie einst und jetzt* (Johannes Günther Verlag, Leipzig und Wien, 1936); and Mr. M. W. Fodor, the respected Hungarian writer, in *South of Hitler* (Allen & Unwin, 1938), states, "With the cognisance of the Russian General Staff (with whom Dombrievitch was in contact through the medium of the Russian Military Attaché, General Artamanoff), the murder of the Archduke was carried out on June 28th, 1914". I have asked Mr. Fodor for the evidence of his statement, but he only replied that "these facts were generally known". But no eye-witness has come forward and no document has ever been found that bears out this theory; and I understand that the Bolsheviks, with a free run of the relevant archives, have never discovered an atom of evidence in support of it. The time element, as Professor Seton Watson has pointed out in his *Sarajevo*, makes it highly improbable. I leave readers to judge if the Russian General Staff, or "Apis" when attempting to involve the Russian General Staff in a European war, would have relied on the naïve group of conspirators Mr. Stephen Graham has described with such admirable accuracy in *St. Vitus' Day*. But nonsense like this Russian legend is scattered through a great many books, particularly if the writer is of Austrian or German origin. A conspicuous recent example is Otto Strasser's *A History of My Own Times*, all of whose references to Balkan history are wildly inaccurate. A particularly absurd passage accuses on the most grotesque grounds the late Svetozar Pribichevitch of complicity in the Sarajevo *attentat*. Professor Gilbert Murray or Mr. Justice Frankfurter would not be a less likely criminal.

The following works are those which I think the reader will find the most directly relevant among those I have consulted for the purposes of this work:

*The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, by E. Gibbon.  
(London, 1896.)

*The History of the Roman Empire* (1893), by J. B. Bury.

*The History of the Later Roman Empire* (1889), by J. B. Bury.

*The History of the Eastern Roman Empire* (1912), by J. B. Bury.

*Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. XII.

- Les Invasions barbares*, by Ferdinand Lot. (Payot, 1937.) (An exposition of highly important material, absolutely necessary to the understanding of modern European history.)
- History of the Byzantine Empire*, by A. A. Vasilev. (University of Wisconsin, 1928.) (This is faintly tinted with a Russian pro-Bulgarian bias, which, with Slav persistence, is brought to bear on events now remote by centuries.)
- Histoire de Constantinople jusqu'à la fin de l'empire, Tr. sur les Originales grecs de Monsieur Cousin*. (4 vols.) 1672-4. (It is time some British scholar imitated this enterprise, which is an extraordinary feat. It translates the histories of Agathias, Anna Comnena, Cantacuzenus, Ducas, Leo, Menander, St. Nicephorus, Nicephorus Bryennius, Nicetas, Pachymeres, Procopius, Theophylactus Simocatta.)
- Byzantine Civilisation*, by Steven Runciman. (Arnold, 1933.) (An admirable study.)
- The Byzantine Achievement*, by Robert Byron. (Routledge, 1929.) (The author, whose death by enemy action all his friends and readers must deplore, wrote this when he was under twenty-five, and it is a remarkable effort. It forms a wholesome corrective to the nonsense that used to be talked about the decadence of Byzantium.)
- La Civilisation serbe au moyen âge*, by Konstantin Jireček, tr. 1920. (A brief work of the greatest importance.)
- Geschichte der Serben*, by Konstantin Jireček. (Gotha, 1911-18.)
- Christianity in the Balkans*, by M. Spinka. (The American Society of Church History, 1933.) (This is a work of considerable historical importance, covering ground till now neglected.)
- Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. IV. (Very poor. Although it was planned by Professor Bury, the level of the whole volume is disappointing. But it gathers the facts, or rather approximations of the facts, in a single volume, and can be used as a basis for further study.)
- The Serbian People*, by Prince and Princess Lazarovitch Hrebelianovitch. (T. Werner Laurie, 1914.) (This book is artless in appearance, but is actually extremely able.)
- History of Serbia*, by H. W. Temperley. (G. Bell, 1917.) (A very useful book.)
- Serbia*, by L. F. Waring. (Home University Library, 1917.)
- Serbia of the Serbians*, by Cheddo Miyatovitch. (Pitman, 1915.)
- History of Servia and the Servian Revolution*, tr. Mrs. A. Kerr, by Leopold von Ranke.
- The Lives of the Serbian Saints*, by Voyeslav Yanitch and C. Patrick Hankey. (Macmillan, N.Y., 1921.)
- Kosovo*; a translation of the heroic songs of the Serbs, by Helen Rootham. (Blackwell, 1920.)
- The Ballads of Marko Kraljevitich*, by D. H. Lowe. (Cambridge University Press, 1922.)
- Yugoslav Popular Ballads*, by Dragutin Subotitch. (Cambridge University Press, 1932.)

- L'Histoire de Dalmatie*, by L. de Voinovitch (—1918). (Hachette, 1934.) (A brilliant study.)
- Dalmatia, the Quarnero and Istria, with Cetinje and the Isle of Grado*, by Sir T. G. Jackson (Oxford, 1887). (A classic work to be read by everyone about to visit Dalmatia, both for its historical and its architectural studies.)
- Mémoires du duc de Raguse (le maréchal Marmont)*.  
*Geschichte von Venedig: I. Band, bis zum Tode Enrico Dandolo*, Gotha, 1905. *II. Band, Die Blüte bis 1516*, Gotha, 1920; *III. Band, der Niedergang*, Stuttgart, 1934, by H. Kretschmayr.
- Travels in Dalmatia and Montenegro; History of Dalmatia*, by Sir Gardner Wilkinson, 1848.
- Architecture of Diocletian's Palace at Spalato*, by Robert Adam.
- Through Bosnia and Herzegovina on Foot during the Insurrection*, 1875, with *historical Review of Bosnia, etc.*, 1876, by Sir Arthur Evans. (Longman.)
- Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey in Europe*, by Miss Muir Mackenzie and Miss Irby. (Bell & Daldy, 1867.) (This is an admirable work, indispensable to the student of the Balkans.)
- Turkey in Europe*, by Sir Charles Eliot under pseudonym "Odysseus". (A key work. Sir Charles Eliot was one of the finest minds of his time, and a writer of beautiful and restrained prose. It must, however, be remembered that at the end of his life he became a Buddhist, and an inability to appreciate the Christian contribution to civilisation affects his view of the Turkish invasion.)
- Sarajevo*, by R. W. Seton Watson. (Hutchinson, 1927.) (An admirable work, which ought to be read by those who have swallowed whole Professor B. Sidney Fay's *Origins of the World War*, 1929; 1932. Professor Fay's bias can be judged by the fact that he contributed a preface to the English edition of *Apis und Este*, the first novel of Bruno Brehm's venomous anti-Slav trilogy.)
- L'Attentat de Sarajevo*, by Albert Mousset. (Payot, 1930.) (The report of the trial.)
- St. Vitus' Day*, by Stephen Graham. (Benn, 1930.) (An account, fictional in appearance, but faithful to fact, of the Sarajevo conspirators.)
- La Crise bosniaque (1908-9)*, 2 vols., by M. Nintchitch. (Alfred Costes, 1937.)
- The Annexation of Bosnia*, by Bernadotte Schmitt. (Cambridge, 1937.)
- The Great Powers and the Balkans (1875-78)*, by M. D. Stoyanovitch. (Cambridge University Press, 1938.)
- A Royal Tragedy*, by Cheddo Miyatovitch.
- The Southern Slav Question and the Habsburg Monarchy*, by R. W. Seton Watson, 1911.
- The Hapsburg Monarchy*, by H. Wickham Steed. (Constable, 1913.)
- The Reign of the Emperor Franz Josef*, by Karl Tschupplik. (G. Bell, 1930.)
- Letzte Jahrzehnte einer Grossmacht*, by R. Sieghart, 1932.
- Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, by Field-Marshal Conrad von Hötzendorf.
- Franz Ferdinand, Erzherzog*, by T. von Sosnosky, 1920.

- Das Ende der Dynastie Obrenovitch*, by P. F. Bresnitz, 1899. (Written by a rogue called Georgevitch, who was at one time Prime Minister of Serbia. A fascinating piece of humbug.)
- The Serbian Tragedy, with Impressions of Macedonia*, by Herbert Vivian, 1904.
- La Serbie d'hier et de demain*, by N. Stoyanovitch, 1917.
- Macedonia, its Races and their Future*, by H. N. Brailsford, 1906.
- The Serbs, Guardians of the Gates*, by R. G. Laffan. (Oxford, 1918.)
- The Birth of Yugoslavia*, by Henry Baerlein. (Parsons, 1922.)
- Alexander of Yugoslavia*, by Stephen Graham. (Cassell, 1938.)
- The Native's Return*, by Louis Adamic. (Gollancz, 1934.) (A study by a Slovene who had emigrated to America. It is written from the Communist point of view of that date, and is lively and interesting, particularly in passages that relate to Slovenia. But the picture of the country as a whole is over-simplified, and, oddly enough, although strongly pro-Croat, greatly irritated the Croats by what they thought to be its expatriate, non-Slav attitude.)
- Balkan Holiday*, by David Footman. (Heinemann.) (This is an entertaining travel book, designed to amuse, but it is full of knowledge and good sense.)
- L'Itinéraire de Yougoslavie*, by A. T'Serstevens. (Grasset, 1938.)
- Profane Pilgrimage*, by L. Fielding Edwards. (Duckworth, 1938.)
- A Wayfarer in Yugoslavia*, by L. Fielding Edwards. (Methuen, 1939.)
- Undeclared War*, by Elizabeth Wiskemann. (Constable, 1939.) (A very able presentation of the situation of Yugoslavia immediately before the War.)
- Living Space*, by Stoyan Pribitchevitch. (Heinemann, 1940.) (One of the most useful books written in late years. It is a survey of the Balkans, with particular reference to the Yugoslavs, by a young Liberal, the son of Svetozar Pribitchevitch, whom King Alexander drove into exile.)
- The Soul of Yugoslavia*, by H. D. Harrison. (Hodder & Stoughton, 1941.) (I include this because it is a work full of information, by a reliable journalist who was a resident for some years in Belgrade, but it appeared too late for me to consult it.)

Much of the material for this book I have derived from conversations with individual Yugoslavs, either during this journey or during a later and longer visit. Some of these conversations I have reproduced, and some I have not, either because the information imparted was of more interest than the way it was imparted, or for reasons of discretion. I would, for example, like to reproduce the testimony of the officer to whom Tankositch said, at a time when it cannot have seemed specially advisable to make that statement, "We told nobody about the young men from Sarajevo, nobody at all"; but he detested the deed, and would greatly have disliked his involuntary association with it to be disclosed. I have therefore allowed his information to colour my views without defining it. But I had hoped to acknowledge the help of all these friends. This is, however, not possible at present. All the people I mention in this book are now either dead or living in a state of misery

as yet impossible for us of the West to imagine. Not one of them, except Gerda and the yellow-haired monk in Dechani, can have escaped. If I were to name any of my friends, this might add a last extravagance to their sufferings.

I would like to express my gratitude for help in the preparation of this book to His Excellency the Yugoslav Minister, Dr. Soubotitch, and his wife, Dr. Anna Soubotitch; to Dr. Dragutin Subotitch, of the School of Slavonic Studies; to Miss Vera Javarek; to Mrs. Catherine Brown — a very heavy debt this; to Miss Elizabeth Wiskemann; to Mr. Jan Boissevain; to Mr. David Footman; to Mr. Peter Brown; to Mrs. Rudoi; and to Greta Wood. I cannot find the words to convey what I owe to Margaret Hodges, who has typed most of the manuscript, read the proofs, and enabled me to get the book to the press in spite of the distraction caused by a long and incapacitating illness.

As for my husband, Henry Andrews, it is true that whatever is best in this book is his, and that during the years of its writing he never flagged in his desire to relieve me of all the drudgery he could take on his shoulders. The maps and photographs have been his special care. But most of all I thank him for the patience with which he watched me as I engaged on what seemed till very recently the curiously gratuitous labour of taking an inventory of a foreign country. It took great faith, for which I am most grateful.

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